

**ALONE WITH GOD
CHILDREN DYING IN INFANCY
AND OTHER SERMONS.**

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SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
JERSEY CITY, N. J.



MEMORIAL VOLUME.

“ALONE WITH GOD,”

“CHILDREN DYING IN INFANCY”

AND

OTHER SERMONS

BY

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Jersey City, N. J.*

JERSEY CITY, N. J.

ALBERT DATZ, PUBLISHER
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TO THE

Scotch Presbyterian Church,

JERSEY CITY, N. J.

In memory of our ten years' happy experience as pastor
and people, with the prayer for divine blessing
upon the congregation in all their work
of faith and labor of love.

THE AUTHOR.

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'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow,
The star is dimmed that lately shone,
'Tis midnight in the garden now
The suffering Saviour prays alone.

'Tis midnight, and from ether-plains
Is borne the song that angels know,
Unheard by mortals are the strains
That sweetly soothe the Saviour's woe.

ALONE WITH GOD.

SERMON I.

“Alone ; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”—JOHN xvi: 32.

We might use these words in the treatment of our Saviour's solitariness, but it is our purpose rather to consider them as a general principle.

In one sense, my friends, it seems natural to think of ourselves as not alone in this world. We are members of the great human family, bound together with the whole by our physical and mental likeness, by our common dependence on each other for support, by our business and commerce, by language and customs and habits, and by the duties we owe to one another.

How true it is that we are connected with all this life, that we are not alone, that there are multitudes like ourselves on all hands. Such considerations show that we are not alone in this world of life and activity and responsibility.

“Never, believe me,
Appear the Immortals,
Never alone.”

But while thus true we are not alone in the world, there are many senses in which we are alone. Solitude

surrounds us and presses upon us all. We are as the words express it, "Alone and yet not alone."

I. And the first consideration we offer as suggested by the text is *there is solitude in our very nature*. Although I am a member of the human family, yet my individuality marks me out from all other men. While the branches of a tree afford a striking and beautiful illustration of the union of men in faith and love, yet I am not like a branch. Its union with the tree is necessary to its very life. Separate it from the stem, and no longer does the living sap flow into every leaf and twig, no longer can it bear fruit.

But every man has a distinct personality. Each of us lives by himself. There is a circle, so to speak, that surrounds the individuality of every man. Into this no one can enter. Even the tender child to whom you have given life and over whom the parent bends with deepest love is separate from you. It has an organization of its own. And within its tiny body, there are the same distinct operations of life, there are miniature forms of the heart and lungs and pulse that beat within yourselves, of the sinews and muscles that knit your frame into manly strength. While therefore that child is so helpless and dependent upon you, so that, if you dealt carelessly with it or left it to itself, it would die, yet how independent of you is its existence. The fondest parental care cannot stay disease. He has no control over the rude hand of death that may in a moment snatch his beloved from him. And so with us all. We are alone in the world.

We are separate from one another in virtue of our physical nature. And how true is this also because of our immortal part ! You may in a sense enter into the soul of another by sympathy. There may be such communion that your very being seems merging into that of another. Yet how unreal is this communion. It is merely a figurative expression. Somewhere in heaven, perhaps, there may be the reality which this figure describes. But it is not here. There is no real communion. As husband and wife sit by the fireside, and speak of the events of the day, or the many interests which bind their souls in one—yet what different paths may their inmost thoughts be pursuing, the one retracing the pathway of his past life and there are presented to him the delightful scenes of youth, or there may start before him the revered forms of parents or friends who have long since passed away, while the imagination of his partner may be filled with the future opening before her with bright prospects Again around the table the members of a happy family may be telling interesting stories, or singing merry songs, yet if we could enter into the soul of each, how differently affected every one ! You would perhaps find the brain of that boy fired with his possible future while the attention of another might be given to the story or song. Or I may be standing in the street before some advertising sheet, which tells of the newest play, or of some great hall of commerce. You come up and stand by my side reading apparently the same words. Yet how far from the truth might this be.

I am looking at the words yet not seeing them all the time. My mind is at the other side of the world or revelling among the stars, or the cares and sorrows of life are wholly absorbing my thoughts. How true then of our mind—of our heart—that we are alone, that a circle surrounds our thought and feeling into which no other person, not even our closest friend, can enter. We are

“A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.”

Yet in respect of existence we are *not alone*, for the Father is with us. Our bodily life is in His hands, so that when He withdraws his hands we die. It is He who keeps us in health from day to day. Our soul life is also dependent entirely upon Him. It is He who gives us the power of vigorous thinking, or of calm judgment, or impulsive earnestness. While no fellow can enter thoroughly into the enclosure of our individuality, God can ever do so. He is present with us in our secret thoughts. He presides over our inward consciousness. And no man can separate himself from his Maker. How wonderful to think of this being true of every human being ! The Father is with him—preserving the individual in life. To think that the power which is keeping us this day in strength is doing so with every one of the multitudes who occupy the globe! Verily, all life is in the hands of God. We might descend into the minute, what we would per-

haps call insignificant objects of creation, and say the same thing of them. The insect that you cannot detect with the eye is supported by God. The Father is with it. Animal life, as we see in its myriad forms, is His work, and it is maintained by His hand. And we might ascend on the scale of being up to the archangel that is near the throne, and say, that though this Being can furnish you with displays of marvellous power, yet his life is with God, because the Father is with him. God is in truth the King over all, and we should worship Him as present with all His works—making all things work together for good and by His goodness maintaining millions and millions of animal forms in health and strength.

II. But let us advance to another thought. Solitude arises from *our pursuits in life*. Every one has his or her own calling, and the work to which this leads must absorb our attention to the almost entire exclusion of the pursuits of others. Even when there are hundreds engaged in the same factory or warehouse, separation arises from the fact that every one has a special service to render. There may be mutual dependence upon each other. The work might be rendered incomplete or imperfect through the hands of another being thrown idle by the stopping of the machinery or by sickness or neglect. Yet every one has his own work to do which another cannot do for him—which he must either perform or leave off. And so too with all others. While the merchant is brought into touch with many other men, yet he has a work of his own—away from all eyes—which he is carrying on in his office

or exchange. The very term “professional” points to individual work. Our professions are separating us from all others and compelling us to be alone. Every one has his own ideas and schemes to work out. No man can enter into them. And should he die, they are necessarily left unfulfilled. It is the same with a minister. What solitude arises from his work! He may with others concert schemes for the working of his congregation. He may be the means of helping others to discharge their duties. Still he stands *alone*. The thoughts which he is preparing during the week for his people on the Sabbath compel him to be alone. And in discharging his public duties, separation and isolation necessarily arise. To take the highest example of all—who is more alone than Christ in going about his Father’s business? No other could be the Saviour of men. He came to this world to bear testimony to the *truth*, and in this capacity He was alone. He came to take upon Himself the yoke of all men, and here he was alone. While mingling with the busy world—meeting men in the temple, or market-place, or by the sea shore, or on the mountain side—He was yet alone. Yes! my brethren—lone and solitary as He was while praying on the Mount apart from all others—He was also alone in the fulfilment of His office. He went through life in solitude, marked out from all others by the fact that He was the Teacher of the truth.

But while alone in this sense, we are yet *not alone*, for the Father is with us. No man can separate his calling from the presence of God. God is with you my brother

or sister in the work-shop. God is present with your master in the counting house. The Father is beside the minister in his preparation to preach the truth, or as he kneels by the bed-side of the sick and dying. Jesus said, “Alone, and yet I am not alone, *for the Father is with me.*” How truly was the Father present with Christ in all his work! How truly did Jesus commune with his heavenly Father and thus draw strength and comfort to his wearied body and soul! And let us learn a lesson from this truth, to be faithful and conscientious in the discharge of our duties. Your master may not see you, the servant, or be aware that you are lazy and indifferent while absent from you. But God is with you, noticing and recording your every neglect. The eye of man may not be turned on the dishonest merchant. He may have the reputation of being fair and upright in his dealings. While building his fortune on the false foundation of injustice or deceit, yet no one would suspect this for a single moment. A minister may resort to clever dodges to make up for earnest and laborious work. His people may be edified and delighted with this way of discharging his duties. But God is present with him—conscious of *all* his acts of deceit and hypocrisy. And should not we on this account take God with us into all our work? Should we not do our duty joyously and heartily just because the Father is with us? And if we seize hold of this truth, may we not from the very presence of God derive daily rich supplies of strength and grace for our work? O to depend continually on God! O to be near

Him really in faith and love! Would not this make us herculean in strength? Let us truly fear and love God and manliness will distinguish our work.

III. A third point that suggests itself as unfolding the thought of our text is that we are *alone in regard to salvation*. In another point of view the redemption of Christ brings men together and constitutes them a society harmonious, united, happy. The love of God binds them together in love of each other. But in another sense we are separate from all other men in the reception into our hearts of the grace of God. If we have not been converted and we are yet to be saved, there must come a moment when we have to bow before God, as though there were none in the universe, but Him and my own self. The feeling will arise that you are the *Chief* of sinners. The load of sin and guilt will isolate you in the world and separate you from all other men. Nay, the more you seek union with men in such a crisis of your soul you are the less likely to receive benefit from God. We are apt to rush away from this solitude in God's presence and seek refuge in business, or pleasure, or society. We want to drown the thought of our solitariness. We are anxious to get away from our convictions and fears. We would destroy personality by rushing away from ourselves. But doing this there is no chance of being saved. The grace of God cannot touch us, because we have fled from the spot on which God in his mercy showered it down. If, on the contrary, we would receive from God the blessings of

pardon and peace, we must get them *all alone*. Salvation must be preached to an unconverted man as though there were not another person in all the world but himself. O no, it will not do for anyone to say, that the word so earnestly spoken from the pulpit is well suited for my neighbor, *it is not for me*. And is it not an awful and strange thought, that, while a mother sacrifices herself every day for her beloved child, yet she cannot save that child from perdition. What would not many a fond parent give to save her child? The World! it would be thrown into the balance in a second. Riches!! Honor!!! Would they not be cast aside in a moment? She may use means. She may pray earnestly to God for her child. She may impress her son from his earliest years with the love and goodness of Jesus. She may train him to read the Bible and go to Church. She may labor day and night to make him look to heaven as the end of life. Yet that child must believe for himself, must *cling* to Christ for himself, must mourn over *his sins* for himself. It has a burden to bear that no one can bear for it. And so too with every one. *We are alone.* We must come to God, each man by himself and learn the simple lessons of faith and love.

But how true in regard to *Salvation* that while alone, we are yet not alone, for the Father is with us. Is not our salvation from the Lord? Is it not the will of God, even our sanctification? Is it not God's work to breathe new desires and holy thoughts into our souls? Does not Jesus say to us as individuals—“*him that cometh*

unto me I will in no wise cast out?" Does not the Holy Spirit strive with each one to convict him of sin? And O! would we be saved, it is not by depending upon ourselves but it is by earnestly seeking God. Let us delight in the presence of the Father. Let us meet God's work in us by earnest efforts on our part. Let us work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and thus receive the benefit of the work which God is ever carrying on within us to make us will and do of his good pleasure, and then truly we will be pardoned by Him and daily sustained by His grace, so that at length we may enter into that blessed presence, when we shall see God face to face and rejoice forever in the society of the redeemed.

IV. But again, the thought of solitariness arises from considering *the sufferings to which we are exposed, and death* that must visit every human being, unless the Lord doth come in our day. Is it not true indeed that our sufferings throw up a great barrier between ourselves and all others, and leave us *alone*? Let sickness visit me, and while in the overflow of your brotherly sympathy you may visit my bedside, and by the pressure of your hand, and tear in your eye and tender words, you seek to do all for me that a dear friend can, yet—willing though you be—you cannot take my sufferings to yourself and endure them in my stead. I must lie there, separated from you by the feelings that possess me. Or, again should calamity befall me in my business, and while ready to do all that kindness dictates to your loving heart, the depres-

sion that arises from my helpless condition is *mine alone*. No other can take upon him the burden that weighs me down. Or should death visit your home either by the slow process of known disease or by a shock that prostrates you to the ground, what solitude there is in your condition! Warm-hearted friends may visit and condole with you. But you hear them not—you see them not. Were it not they understand you too well, they would think you strangely cold and distant. But, friends, there is a solitude that must come to every one sooner or later—that none of us has any conception of, though we have keenly felt the solitude arising from suffering—and that is *when you and I come to die*. O! I have often been struck with the strange anomaly presented in the chamber of the dying. Here am I called to visit such and speak with him. Why is it the patient often appears listless and indifferent to what I say? It is because if he is conscious, he is thinking for himself—it may be—praying for himself. Perchance there comes up at the moment I speak some familiar word of truth, a crowd of old scenes and remembrances—opportunities come and gone—sins committed and unrepented of—omissions innumerable. Yes, that may be the reason, and I have thought in the midst of such a scene that a dying man is better left *alone*—that at all events it is only the privilege of dearest and nearest friends—of a wife, or child, or the minister to be present, and that the crowd of eager and staring and whispering men and women, who come there because of custom or out of curiosity—are only in the way. Let us be deeply

impressed with this last solitude we must all experience, and not vainly put away the thought from our minds *that we too must needs die.*

Jesus, my friends, trod the wine press alone. His was a life of suffering and toil. His career on earth was sad. He was therefore alone. He was often driven from the presence of disciples and dear ones by accusing enemies. With scarcely indeed a friend in the world, He did his work, constantly exposed to persecution. And who can gaze upon His bleeding corpse on the cross of Calvary without feeling how truly He was alone? Still His words “Alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me,” were spoken just before entering upon the hour of His travail. In that moment He was sustained by God. He had before Him the bitter cup, the view of His enraged foes,—present to Him even then were His sufferings on the tree—yet He could say, “I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” Yes! and in the hour of His agony in Gethsemane, although bowed down in solitude and sweating great drops of blood, yet He is not alone, for He said, “Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” On the cross what solitude is expressed in the bitter words, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Yet here we have the moment of His greatest triumph when He prayed for His enemies, “Father forgive them, for they not what they do.” At length the awful sentence rang out into the air, “It is finished.” With these words breathed from His agonized heart, His pure and innocent

spirit parted from this world of sin, and ere a moment had gone, attending angels were rising with Him to the Father's presence—there to witness the honors that were in store for the world's greatest martyr, for the Saviour of men.

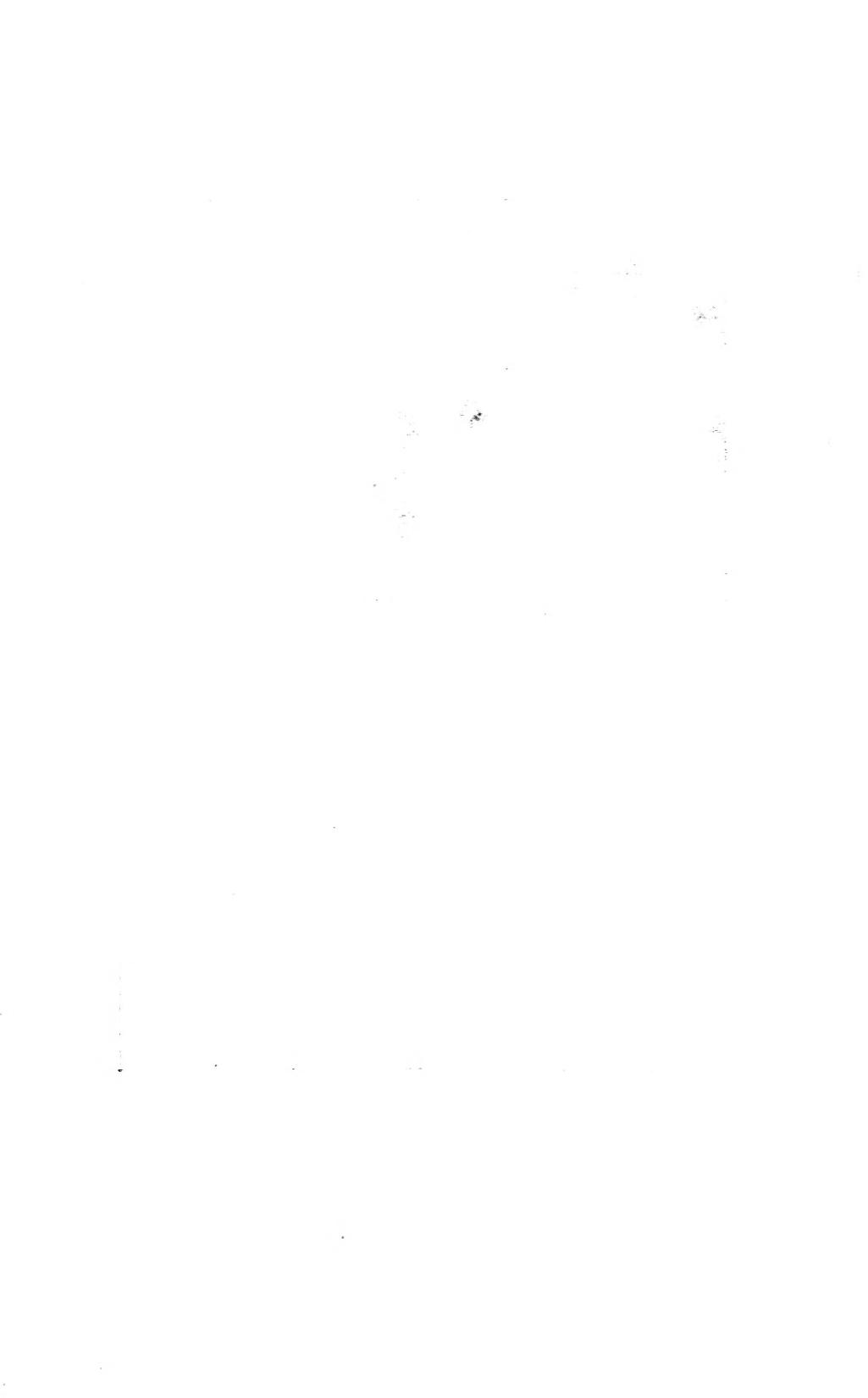
And Christ's words, "Alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me," may be rendered ours by faith. In bodily weakness and mental pain, as children of faith, the Father is with us. When calamity presses sore upon us, we are not alone. When death comes and plucks from our affectionate grasp the beloved form of a parent, or child, *we are not alone*. The Father is with us. Yes, and when at last we are called to experience the solitude of our own dying moments, when familiar voices no longer touch our ears, when we cannot feel the pressing hand of our dearest friend, when the world and pleasure and honor are leaving us forever, yet, believer, *you are not alone*. The Father is with you. He is with you—to comfort and strengthen—with you to catch your parting spirit, and carry it up to the serene heights of celestial bliss, where there will not be such solitude from sorrow and suffering as we have described, but the companionship of angels, and the just made perfect—the companionship of God and his only beloved Son.

Let me urge in conclusion that the only awful solitude in the eternal world is that of a **LOST SOUL**!

IN MEMORY OF DAVID MITCHELL, JR.

Strange we never prize the music
 Till the sweet voiced bird has flown ;
Strange that we should slight the violets,
 Till the lovely flowers are gone ;
Strange that Summer skies and sunshine,
 Never seem one half so fair,
As when Winter's snowy pinions
 Shake the white down in the air,
Then scatter seeds of kindness
 For our reaping by and by.

The sudden and terrible death of David makes this sermon of special value. He not only took keen interest in its composition, but helped to put it in shape for the press. He went out well and hearty on Tuesday morning, August 27th, 1895—proud of his first day as Assistant Superintendent of Columbia College, New York. The dread summons came at night that our boy was dying at Manhattan Hospital, New York. Sad indeed were our feelings when closing his eyes on Wednesday at 6.30 P. M., and saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." As the text really refers to a young lad it is all the more appropriate. Our "wee Davie" was faithful and true. What is loss to us is gain to him. "We shall go to him, but he shall not return to us." We refer with much pleasure to the letter of Messrs. McKim, Mead & White at the end of this sermon.





DAVID MITCHELL, JR.

CHILDREN DYING IN INFANCY.

SERMON II.

*“But now the child is dead, wherefore should I fast?
Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but
he shall not return to me.”—II. SAMUEL xii:—23.*

It is my purpose to speak a word of comfort to many parents who have been bereaved of their off-spring. David, though King of Israel, is not exempt from death approaching his household. Into the circumstances attending the birth of this child we need not enter. What we have to do with is the death here recorded. It is touching to find the grave overshadowing this young life and showing the child was not for this world. The monarch is on a level with his lowliest subject before the king of terrors. There is mystery about the loss of dear little ones which we can hardly solve. Why in countless cases the babe—so lovely, so fair,—just opening its eyes, begemmed with dimpling smiles, the object of that mother's fondest care, the heavenly jewel which the proud father feels has been put in his hand, should be ruthlessly torn from them, to be placed in the cold and shivering tomb, to become nothing more than a shadowy remembrance, is beyond our ken. Oh! what countless numbers of children are thus taken from the gaze and from the hearts

of parents. There is something inexpressibly sad in such bereavements. But we wish, dear friends, while sympathizing with your tears, to turn to the Word for your consolation in the hour of trial.

I. Let us consider, in the first place, the conviction of the Psalmist that he “shall go to his child.” David raises no question about the welfare of his son—though now gone and lost to sight. His dear one is not forgotten. He can never die from his heart. It is evident David believes in a future state. He speaks of himself awaking with the likeness of Christ. The safety of the boy is not doubted for a moment. Only one question is with him—of going to his well beloved. And here let us state his ground for this hope. He believes that he himself will be blessed with a place in the Kingdom of glory because of his faith in the coming Messiah. He has learned to trust in God for his happiness after death. The ground of confidence is the sacrifice which was to be completed by the Saviour at some future period. After heart-felt prayer for forgiveness, when feeling that no offering he can make will avail, and saying, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it, Thou delightest not in burnt offering,” he exclaims, “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise,” and then turns from this to the death of Christ, which is typified by the sacrifices rendered on earth in faith, “Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.” This is

just saying,—“to gain the end of safety there is not anything I would not do, but I rely wholly on the merits of another. I depend upon the true meaning of the sacrifices we are now rendering. I look to ‘Him who shall drink of the brook in the way, who therefore shall lift up his head.’”

And, my dear friends, who have lost precious children, it is our privilege to ask if you can say, “we shall go to them.” As we shall see there can be not a shadow of doubt about the felicity of your dear ones, on what ground are you assured of going to them?

Let us, who know the Gospel in its fullness, realize what is our way to the Kingdom of heaven. It is reliance on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is altogether different with us from the dear ones who have gone before. We must repent of our sins and accept the Saviour. Paul says, “and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” This is what Christ teaches all the way through. He makes sure of salvation to those who believe in what He accomplishes in our behalf. Jesus was sent to carry the load of our guilt and to give us rest. The merits of His death are already His by anticipation. He beholds throughout His career the end of all—His cross. Hence he sets himself the task of winning souls on the basis of his finished work. How precious His words about the new birth to Nicodemus, about living water to the woman at the well, about having the inner eye of the soul opened to the Light to the blind man, to whose bodily eyes He restored sight! Was not Jesus most explicit on this matter to the Syrophenoecian

woman, when He tried her faith, treating her as a Gentile dog compared with the favored children of Israel, and calling forth her wondrous reply, "Nevertheless, the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Well might He cry in her hearing. "Oh, woman, great is thy faith." She was one who was saved by faith because of the death which was to end her Saviour's career. It was the thought of saving souls and fitting them for His kingdom above which fired His words with unknown power, which led to His marvellous discourses, which made Him perform miracles of healing upon all manner of sickness and of raising the dead, which were to be taken as symbols of the grander miracles upon the souls of men which were to be accomplished by His death and by the indwelling Spirit. With what confidence Christ endured unto the end! As a wise Physician He healed in view of the healing which was to be accomplished. And Oh! why was He so earnest in the contemplation of His death? He knew upon that hinged the salvation of men. Never was such a task, and never was a task undertaken with such solicitude! He triumphed, and because of His victory, there was after His ascension an immediate harvest of souls. Thousands were saved through Peter's discourse. Pentecostal times have continued in the church ever since, and no one can tell the numbers who—filled with the light of faith and hope in consequence of the death of Christ being applied to them by the Spirit's power—have thus passed from corruption into the glory of the skies.

And so it is with us, dear friends. Are we counting on meeting the precious little ones who have been taken from us? Oh! are we doing so because Christ died and rose again? Then we are assuredly being prepared for future happiness in the glorious heavens. Let such as believe rejoice that they are adopted by grace and are become "children, and if Children then heirs—heirs of God—joint heirs with Christ." If we are to die this very hour we know it is well with our souls, and we shall go to yonder throng amid which our little ones are shining as stars. This hope gives light to our eye, fortifies our steps, puts life into our hearts. We walk as those who already see the glories which have been revealed. On the other hand, what are we to say to parents, bereaved of children, who have not yet taken hold of Christ with the hand of faith? Did you say, as the little coffin was being borne to the grave, "Can I bring back my child?" no, "I shall go to him?" Are you now exclaiming on this wise as you behold the empty crib, as you call up the dear form, as you think of your lost treasure? Is this with you a mere sentiment? Are you living in sin and still saying, you are to go to your child? Remember it is impossible for you to see that loved one, unless you are taking the accredited way to salvation. What to do, is beautifully set before us in that exquisite story of "Wee Davie," so tenderly told by Norman Macleod. There was the mighty blacksmith whose one child was the pride of his heart and the joy of his hearth. Nevertheless he would

steal away to the tavern in the nights following his days of toil. He came home at mid-night—often the fiend, his soul turned away from even himself in consequence of these orgies. At last “Wee Davie” took ill. Doctors could do nothing to save the darling. The mother’s love did not restrain the hand of death. The child died. He was buried. And then the blacksmith repaired to his workshop. There he got the iron whited to the utmost by making the bellows move with his giant’s grasp. Then he placed the iron on the anvil, and as he struck huge blows, and set the hot sparks flying—expressive of his resentment against Heaven for taking the boy from him—all at once he began to think. “What am I who dare act in this way? Has not God taken my child because of the life I am leading? Yes. Let me stop this course HERE, O my Saviour, whom I have so offended, and devote myself to Thee.” He became a christian, was chosen afterwards to be an elder, and spent many years for Christ. Who can doubt that man as well as his devoted wife could say all along but especially when dying, “I shall go to my child?” And so, dear friends, we counsel you to turn from iniquity, seek the Lord, follow Jesus, and your sorrow will be turned into the joy of again seeing the dear one that has been taken from your gaze.

“ Could you too say, my dearest friend,
If called this hour to die,
I’m going straight to my child’s arms,
Up to the Throne on high?”

II. There is the other conviction of David. "He shall not return to me." The psalmist feels it is well with his son. The ground of this welfare is the mercy of God in the Saviour who is to come. The blood which is to be shed—in fulfillment of the promises of God and the sacrifices which were continually offered by the priests—would cover all inherited sin, as well as in the case of believers the guilt incurred through transgression. There was, therefore, a well defined faith when a child like his was taken away before the time of actual responsible disobedience, that God would freely wash away the inherited evil, because of His satisfaction with the Messiah's death. Our Lord himself makes this clear in His memorable address to the disciples. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven." While without doubt referring in this sentence to the precious truth, that children while in life are peculiarly fitted for His realm of grace, the invitation to little children to come unto Him, along with the added statement, "Of such is the Kingdom of heaven," find their fullest meaning in the examples of babes called by the heavenly Father to their eternal home. Our Saviour when once more dealing with this subject, we are told, took a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples, and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." Is it not significant that He adds after a series of warnings, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, That in heaven

their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven?" This matter is thus made sure to our minds. The blood of Jesus is shed for the remission of all sins. Those who believe in Him have their guilt removed because of His sacrifice. Our dear ones dying in infancy are not responsible, because they are not capable of actual transgression. The sin they brought with them into the world is washed away. Dying then in early life, they go at once to Jesus and are enfolded in His arms. What a comfort have we in this thought! We have lost precious ones when just opening their eyes to the light of day. They have gone with Him who created them. Yes, you should not now mourn as those who are without hope. Your precious off-spring have a location. They are not dead, though the grave hath cast its gloomy shadow over you and your household. They are living because they inherited an immortal nature. To their souls, passing from these tiny bodies at the moment you are hovering over them in their last struggles, God is imparting eternal life which was purchased for them by His son. What a consolation it becomes, when you mourn, you need not weep bitter tears! You may be assured they are now constituting part of the Father's house, and that truly many of the mansions prepared by the risen and ascended Lord are occupied by those you love.

And would you, then, even if you could, dear father, dear mother, looking upon the little treasures of clothing, of toys, of helps to feed and nourish—would you, we ask, seek to bring back your child from the home whither it

has gone? Here indeed is a mystery of the human heart that, while you left nothing untried to save the life of your babe, now it has pleased the Heavenly Father to take it away, you would do nothing to bring it back. At least this is the language of faith. "It is well with my child." Having such conviction, you would not have him returned to this world of sin, of trial, of suffering, of tears and anguish. Your little one is now happy with God. You would not rob him of that joy. You can think of your boy, your girl, as now "playing with the children in the streets of the New Jerusalem." You would not have him come back to these crowded thoroughfares, where there is so much wickedness. Think then of the deep meaning which may thus be given your words,—"he shall not return to me." There is acquiescence on your part in the will of God. You have brought your tears and anguish to the point of saying, "Thy will, not mine, be done," and you would not revoke that sentence for the world. Nor can we fail to notice what even careless parents feel when burying their dead child. They have a notion of the welfare of their son or daughter being made sure. From my experience as pastor, I can say, "it is marvellous how much faith of a general kind shows itself even with drunken, vicious, infidel people at the funerals of their children." Why do they want the minister, then, to say a word of kindness to their hearts? Is there not, on the part of the wicked, an almost universal testimony to the value of religion given by them in their bereavements? We have no fear for

Christianity, when it so commends itself in the hour of sorrow to those who in their ordinary conduct despise and reject it.

But, my dear friends, there is much more than this in the words, "he shall not return to me." These children going to God in their infancy, you know, are to live in His presence. Do you imagine, when you go to heaven yourself, you will know your own child? You remember how Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew him not, and why? Just because they were full grown men when cruelly selling their brother to the Ishmaelites. They had now almost the same appearance as then, but Joseph the laddie was matured, changed—he was the full-grown man. And so methinks it will be when you reach the other shore. It may be that many years have to pass before you die. And do you think these infants are to remain babes all through eternity? No. We regard a child dying as a seed planted in the soil of Heaven and sure to grow. Indeed, it is my own feeling they will attain a loftier stature and sooner there than here. For, you must remember, the conditions will then be far more favorable to growth. You know well that the tree, which in a cold and barren soil is stunted, poor in foliage, and fruitless, transplanted to a garden enriched with fertilizing substances and enjoying genial sunshine and plentiful rain, will then become mighty in its stature, be clothed with beauty, and will yield abundant fruit. So I believe it to be with these infants going thus to God. They could not know anything while with you, but now they

have become mighty intelligences—full of wisdom. They never learned what faith meant, but think of the assurance with which they take part in the services of the Sanctuary above. However much you loved them, they could not, like the glassy lake, return your light to you, but now their hearts are enlarged, their capacity for devotion has widened, their praise of God is far more real than ours. And withal being not only free of sin, but made holy and reflecting the light of Christ's countenance directly shining upon them, imagine their power of thought, of meditation, of discovery! Think you, they will be ignorant of the laws of nature as they bask under the Sun of their souls? Do you fancy they will not know God, even as they are known, now that they can gaze into the very countenance of their Father? All our knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus is as nothing compared with theirs who are continually enjoying His presence. The mysteries of the Holy Ghost are being more fully disclosed to them than to us. And if society improves us—if we grow intellectually, morally, spiritually, when with good men, what will it be with your beloved ones enjoying day and night—as we say—the blessed company of the redeemed? Nay more, we have no proper conception of the angelic throng, of the hosts of mighty intelligences in the Kingdom of heaven, of the vast range and orders of the glorified, but all this is familiar to those awakened—as your children—with the likeness of God. I believe that at first you will not know your own child.

But there is far more in the words, "he shall not return to me," than even this. I spoke of the awful mystery of children dying and in such multitudes. Go to the cemeteries and behold the vast throng of tiny graves. What does it all mean? Ah, now I see. It means that heaven is not to have a small number of the saved. However much discouraged as we look upon the few who are entering in at the strait gate and pursuing the narrow way, and the many taking the wide gate and the broad road that leadeth to destruction, imagine not the inheritance above is going to be a sort of failure for want of souls saved by Christ. We have no means of seeing the multitudes who have been brought out of darkness into marvellous light; but this we do know, the children who haved passed away in early life are going to constitute countless millions themselves. Think of it, not only your babe will be there, but the many children you know to have been removed. Think of the little ones thus dying in our own city during this generation, but what of those of other generations saved by the blood of Christ? Try to conceive the many dear ones passing away at this very moment throughout the earth! They are entering into the light beyond. Nay, think of the children of all lands and all times thus redeemed and now glorified! We need not fear for the countless throngs of children thus dying in countries we call heathen, still wanting in Gospel privileges. They have been bought back with the precious blood. They are now in the Kingdom above. Let us take courage with the mystery of life thus so far solved,

and lift up our eyes from this side of the Jordan, and behold in the Kingdom, where Jesus is the centre, the company of the redeemed little ones which no man can number. It is a perfect inspiration to one's soul who thus gazes into eternity, sees the reality and has the vision of the almighty King, the author of the life and glory of these vast multitudes.

Ah those little ice-cold fingers,
How they point our memories back
To the hasty words and actions,
Strewn along our backward track.
How those little hands remind us,
As in snowy grace they lie,
Not to scatter thorns but roses
For our reaping by and by.

Rev. David Mitchell,
Dear Sir:

New York, August 29th, 1895.

We cannot adequately express to you our sympathy in the great grief which has entered your family in the sudden death of your boy. It has removed from our office circle one who as an example of pure character and high sense of duty could not well be spared. He came into our office with no especial claim to our interest, and yet by doing well whatever he was asked to do, he soon attracted the attention of older men who were always glad to have David assist them. In this way he was detached to the Columbia College work at the request of the Superintendent, Mr. Vanderbent. It seemed to be a great opportunity for him, and while we should have been glad to have kept him in the office, we considered it directly in the line of promotion for him to learn something of actual construction at this time. That this disaster should follow so closely is a great blow to us all and has made a great impression upon this office, where he was universally esteemed. While it is perhaps no great consolation in your present grief, it must surely be a satisfaction to you to feel that your son was in every way worthy, and that his example of an upright, faithful life will not be lost upon the young men with whom he has been associated.

With assurance to you and your family of our most hearty sympathy, we are

Very sincerely yours,

McKIM, MEAD & WHITE.

I've found the pearl of greatest price !
 My heart doth sing for joy ;
And sing I must, for Christ is mine,
 Christ shall my song employ !
Christ is my Prophet, Priest, and King ;
 My prophet full of light,
My great High Priest before the throne,
 My King of heavenly light.
Christ Jesus is my All in All,
 My comfort, and my love ;
My life below ; and He shall be
 My joy and crown above.

CHRIST THE TRUTH.

SERMON III.

“Pilate said unto him, what is truth? Jesus said unto him, I AM THE TRUTH.—JOHN xviii: 38.—JOHN xiv: 6.

There is something very striking in this expression, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.” In these words we have the beginning, the middle, and the ending of a christian’s career. When he begins his new course it is through Christ the Way. When he is found continuing, it is by Christ the Truth. And when after conversion he enters into the joys of life or after death he becomes the possessor of heaven, it is by Christ the Life. While, however, these three thoughts may be viewed as separate, they are so much one that they cannot be severed from one another. Christ is the Truth and therefore He is the Way as the teacher to the Truth. He is the Life because He is the truth which gives life. Like a river, the Messiah or the Christ is three in one. The river is the way to the ocean whither you are bound. It is also the element bearing up the vessel as she advances on this way. And it is that which, being connected with the ocean or really becomes part of it, brings the ship at length to the mighty deep. So Christ is the

Way to the many mansions of which He speaks. He is the Truth which supports you while advancing on this Way. And He is the Life in as much as being thus upheld while proceeding on such a path—that of honorable service—He will at length bring you to the deep sea of eternal joy,—to the quiet and happy rest which remains for the people of God.

Taking these words—“I am the Truth”—as the answer to the question, “what is Truth?” we will this day make them the subject of our mutual and prayerful consideration.

I. Now, we remark, in the first place, that Christ is the Truth, because He taught the truth respecting God. There are three great errors into which men have fallen with regard to God. The first sets up many false gods to be worshipped by men. The second represents Him to be a being of stern, unrelenting, inexorable justice who can have no sympathy with the sins and frailties of mankind. The third speaks of Him as one who will readily overlook our iniquity and demand no adequate punishment for our sins. Now Jesus Christ was opposed to all these views. *I AM THE TRUTH*, He says, because He taught the truth respecting God.

As to the *first* error—idolatry—this receives no countenance from the Saviour. He was equally opposed to the teaching of pagan philosophers on the subject, and to the practices of idolatrous nations. It had ever been the tendency of men when left to themselves to multiply their gods. Even the Jewish people, notwithstanding

their exalted and valuable privileges as the children of God, were prone to fall in with the idolatrous practices of other countries. The Greeks aided by a highly cultivated imagination seemed to make every object around them breathe with deity. Their groves became sacred spots, where deity manifested itself in artistic forms. Their temples were filled with idols. Their great men were elevated to the distinguished position of being divine. The Romans, too, were degraded by their idol worship. They copied their imaginative neighbors the Greeks. And the gods of the one country were often transported to the other—to be added to their own list of deities to be held in homage. All nations at the time of Messiah's advent may be said to have been—either in spirit or form or both—idolaters, worshipping the works of their own hands, or regarding the objects of creation as their gods. But Christ came to this world to convey to men the true conception of God as father, friend. It is very noticeable that Jesus does not attack idolatry openly and directly. With reverence be it spoken, it would have been out of place to have made such an onslaught in Judea where the temple of Jehovah was built and where the worship of the living and true God was continually observed. But He ever seeks to imbue the minds of his hearers with reverence and affection for the Father above. And then without formal instruction on the subject, He leaves this principle to speak for itself to the hearts and consciences of men. He thus seeks to impart that law or principle which when carried out

would prevent the Jewish people from falling back into the idolatrous practices of other countries, and which when preached to Gentiles would gradually turn them from the absurdities of idolatry to the worship and service of the living God. For example when He observed in the woman at the well of Jacob, that superstitious spirit which would confine the worship of God to some consecrated place, such as the mount on which she said her fathers had worshipped, He uttered these deep words, "God is a spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." When by His miracles He revealed that the Divine power was within himself, He did not set himself up as opposed to the God of Abraham, but rather as that God manifest in the flesh. Christ and the Father are not two Gods, but He says, "I and the Father are one." And then as man—ever communing with the Father, ever realizing the presence as of one in heaven, ever praying to the Father, thanking the Father for the countless and unceasing bounties of His providence,—all this is so vivid and striking that, when it has been made our example, it must banish all idolatrous feelings from our hearts, and the reality of Christ's reverence for one Father and of his love for Him will set forth the true worship more powerfully than ever could the profoundest speculations regarding the nature and attributes of Deity.

As to the *second* great error that represents God as a being of stern, unrelenting justice who can have no sympathy with the sins and frailties of mankind, Jesus

sets forth that God is earnestly desiring the salvation of men. The distinguishing merit of His teaching is the love and sympathy of God for those who had broken and despised His laws. He says in the memorable address which arose from His conversation with Nicodemus, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” He himself as the beloved Son of the Father left the heavenly mansions, and thus as the apostle says, “for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be rich.” The grand doctrine which distinguishes the Bible above all other books is that of God’s mercy towards sinners. It is where the truth has been wholly obliterated or partially obscured we find men fancying their gods will not favor them, or give heed to their prayers, until they have torn their own flesh, or offered some victim to appease their wrath. The poor heathen tearing his hair, or inflicting so many lashes upon his body, the deluded seeker after a righteousness of his own lying naked on a bed of nails, or starving his body, or giving to priest craft the pence which he has earned by the sweat of his brow ; aye too, the self-righteous amongst ourselves who goes through the services of his church as if doing some meritorious work —all with the notion of pleasing God—gives a most degrading view of the deity. If we would learn *the truth*, let us look to Christ. Here is the God of heaven and of earth—*manifest in the flesh*—visiting sinful men in the fullness of his mercy. Let those who tell us God is stern

regard Christ as he sojourns upon the earth. Let them say, Is God hard, unrelenting when He, who is His own everlasting Son, is seen sitting at the same table with publicans and sinners? He who gave a brother's hand to a Magdalene, who would not condemn another poor sister whom all the Pharisees scornfully called a sinner, who would not turn a deaf ear to the blind when they earnestly asked to receive their sight, who had compassion on the multitude when without bread in a desert place; He who continually shone with the pure beams of benevolence; He who at last gave himself up to the awful death of the cross that poor sinners like us might have a way of access unto God; He who, to save others could not save himself, is the great Teacher enlightening men regarding the Divine compassion. Ever from His lips pours forth the voice of mercy. For the first time in the clearest light, not only by words, but through the personality of the Saviour, God is set before men as their heavenly father, as their brother—the husband of the church, the dresser of the vineyard, the shepherd of his flock. What precious figures these are! They set forth God strikingly and simply in the attitude of mercy. And, therefore, Christ authoritatively says, I AM THE TRUTH, because having shown himself merciful to sinful men He thus teaches that loving compassion is an attribute of the divine character.

The *third* error sets forth God as a being who will readily overlook our sins and demand no adequate punishment upon the guilty. So dark by nature are the hearts of

men with respect to the character of God that a sort of sentimental belief in his mercy has become almost universally current. The heathen, scourging himself at one moment to please his gods, fancies after such religious service he is free to do what he likes best—to commit even the terrible crime of murder. Then while the blood of the victim is yet reeking on his knife, he may go back to his temple and do penance as before. Nor is this view confined to pagans. Amongst many others the doctrines of penance and absolution are openly avowed. In all our churches what numbers who are lulling their consciences to sleep, allowing themselves to dwell only upon the goodness and mercy of God to the exclusion of Infinite Justice which necessarily inheres in his character. It is from Christ, in truth, we derive a knowledge of the Divine justice. He reveals how justice blends and harmonizes with mercy, how God is just and yet the forgiver of sin, but how He cannot forgive transgression if His justice will thereby be impaired. To Christ's life we must look as furnishing many examples of this. We cannot point to one case of him forgiving sin at the expense of that infinite justice which belonged to him. There is not the case of a man having had his sins blotted out by Christ without first coming to *Him*, and believing upon *him*. That Jesus claimed the right to forgive must be conceded, and that He grounded that right upon his own personal merits—*upon the merits above all of His sacrificial death*—must be apparent to every one who studies his life and discourses. Why then does He demand personal faith in

himself as the basis on which forgiveness of sins may be pronounced? The simple answer is, because His life and death were a sacrifice for sin. What the Saviour sets before us is that God is merciful and ready to forgive, that *He hates sin*. He loves the sinner. Accordingly while those who come to him simply believing in Him have invariably their sins forgiven, see, how differently He treats the hypocritical—those who are grievous sinners in the sight of God, but who make light of their sins and assume at the same time a sanctimonious aspect. He cannot help showing his scorn of them. He calls them by the right name. Here then in Christ we have exhibited that justice which cannot allow mere compassion to interfere with its rightful exercise. Thus Christ reveals to man what God is. On account of the perfect Sacrifice which was made to satisfy Divine justice, He presents himself a merciful God to his erring children. He will forgive if we come to him sincerely in the name of His Son. But He can never overlook the conduct of the unrepenting wicked. Those who love their evil and will not come to Him, must remain where they are—*outside of God*. God's justice is a hedge of thorns around his own character. Just as surely as Christ condemned the Pharisees, so are all those condemned who say to themselves regarding their iniquities. “God will not be so exacting as all that. Surely He will have mercy upon a poor sinner like me. Surely He cannot punish one who in other respects is so amiable and good.” But this, my friends, *is building upon the sand*.

II. We remark, *in the second place*, that Christ is *the Truth*, because as man He showed forth *man's true condition*.

He was true, since in him as man there is exhibited all that is noble and good. Christ is the man. His is ideal manhood. *He lived the truth.* There was ever a harmony between his words and deeds. There is not one sermon spoken throughout the whole course of his life that jars with one single work. He was before men just what He was in the presence of God. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The thought of God's presence was joy to him. That elevated, but did not depress him. He could go from the midst of men to God, He could come back from prayer to the very midst of men, without *as it were* casting off one coat and putting on another to fit him for the change. What, think you, drew that poor weeping sinner to Jesus, what drove from him the wicked and false but this—that here was One before them whom every person felt to be *true*? The penitent knew they could trust him. The false at once saw that his eye pierced to the depths of their souls. Heaven smiled upon him. Hell frowned. Ah! how fearfully was Christ's trueness of character tried. He had to sail the journey of life amid storms at one time—with false lights seeking to misguide him at another. But he sails securely, and reaches the end of his life without one stain on his character, without one false word ever

having been breathed from his lips, without ever—even in thought—being faint or traitorous in the service of God.

What a contrast is Christ in life and character to this false and miserable world! Now, the truth which is seen in Christ's life is this, that for a man to be happy he must be at one with God. Under the furrowed brow—deep down in his soul—there was tranquil peace. What a foundation of peace was expressed in the words—*I and the Father are one*. And He teaches by his experience what is precious truth for our souls that—if we would attain his peace and happiness—we must be united to God and living in harmony with Him. Christ teaches us that without this one needful thing—*union with God*—we can never attain his tranquility. Do what we will, without this union, we will ever be far from true happiness. That is no unmeaning picture of life which represents men in their various pursuits after happiness—some trying social pleasures, others climbing the ladder of ambition, others following lust with keen desire—and the life of every one ending like the bursting of a bauble. But let us begin by putting ourselves in a right relation with God—loving Him as a father, obeying Him as our master—and we will be at rest. This is the teaching of Christ's life. He lived this truth that union with God is man's true condition.

But let us here remark that Christ comes to us and finds men everywhere without union with God. We are all in a wrong state, like a river out of its channel and producing waste marshes, instead of imparting richness to the soil as

it would were it flowing in its right course. As evidence of this Jesus came to the world, but the world knew him not. It regarded him a stranger rather than a friend, and so turned its back upon him. Men by nature are condemned in God's sight. They are His enemies. But now Christ as the Truth comes to man and points the way to union with God—points him to the prospect of becoming true to God, to his fellow-creatures, and to himself. What keeps man from the state for which he was originally intended—from union with God? It is sin—sin unpardoned. It is guilt not washed away. Christ comes and solves the deep problem of human life, as to how man's sins shall be pardoned, as to how his guilt shall be washed away. He the pure and holy Son of God must needs die. That Divine justice which in his life He showed forth demands a perfect sacrifice to be offered before man can be restored. Here is *the Truth* which man needs. "No man can come unto the Father except by me." On our believing Christ depends whether we shall realize the Truth. The truth of the Gospel is this—Faith in the Saviour makes him your substitute. Your sins will then be blotted out. You will be justified as though you had not sinned. From this seed there will grow up within you a renewed nature. Thus changed and growing in grace God's smile will be upon you. Here will be union with your Father in heaven. From this union you will have peace. Then you will become true in life and character. Your prayer to God will not be a mockery. It will harmonize with your life. You will deal in love with your

fellow-creatures. Your children you will train in the fear and love of God. Your neighbours you will love, and you will seek to do them good. And you also will be true to yourself—employing your noble talents aright—having the foundation of truth, and seeking to grow more and more in the knowledge of it.

III. In the *third* place we have to remark that Christ as *the Truth* reveals man's true destiny. There is one thing must strike us when regarding the Saviour and that is the authority with which He speaks of the future. He does not labor to prove to his hearers that there shall be an eternity. He speaks of the future in a natural manner as though it were already present with him. With regard to that eternity awaiting all men, He teaches there are two states in which men shall be found—the one of misery, the other of joy. Here are his own words. “He that believeth hath everlasting life; he that believeth not shall not see life, because the wrath of God abideth on him.” Instead of mocking Christ when teaching this as the truth, just ask your own hearts. “Is Christ one likely to declare anything which He did not *know* to be true?” Remember He does not give it forth as a matter of opinion, that there is to be a future state. He gives it forth authoritatively as a matter of experience. Now, for a moment just ask, “Is He one likely to declare this unless he knew it to be truth?” Even though Christ had not declared the truth regarding the state beyond death, yet the Spirit of his teaching would point it out to a reasoning and reflective mind. But the point is having so

declared, it is on our peril that we do not receive it. Christ is the first who teaches this truth from the personal ground of having been with the Father, of having come from the Father, and now going to Him. He comes to you not only with such words addressed to you, but with the fact of his own resurrection. And there—we can add—is a wonderful teaching of this great truth. The difficulty we have in receiving the doctrine of a future life is that we cannot see beyond death. We may not be able to conceive of a man coming to life again. But Christ is a case in point. The days He spent with his disciples after his resurrection were the true beginning of his reign as King. There was the future life of one begun as we regard it. And so He teaches shall all rise. He speaks of the many mansions in his Father's house, and He speaks no less authoritatively of the awful perdition of the wicked.

Here then we have the sum and substance of the Truth which Christ Jesus exemplified and taught. *I am the Truth*, because the Father dwelleth in me, and His character is seen in my life. *I am the Truth*, because as man I have shown His right condition as at one with God. *I am the Truth*, because having shown man's right condition to be one with Him, I tell you this, such union shall never be severed. Those who are at peace with Him now shall be at peace with Him for ever.

Brethren we have before us principles which it well becomes us to prize. If we have them in our hearts we will be led to adore God, to be true to our elevated nature and to live in view of the dawn of that morn when

the congregation of the redeemed shall swell the notes of heaven with their praises of Christ the Truth. Here are principles which shall secure our freedom from many forms of bondage, more surely than a slave delivered by a friendly hand from chains and prison is free; so is the Christian called to rejoice in a liberty that is lasting and is the beginning of all true happiness. It may be thought we can do little to clear up such a subject as we have before us. But then our small knowledge of the precious gospel of Christ is but a lantern in the hand. While of no use in the midst of the blaze of day, when the sun's light penetrates every spot of earth, yet of what advantage the lamp in the darkness of night. And what does our feeble light do? It does not open the scenery, or reveal the river or mountain at a distance. It shows us one step to be taken. When we take that one step we do not pitch aside our lantern but, having found benefit from it, we carry it with us. Then the lantern shows our next step. And there is the great law. Ever having Christ our bright lamp by night we are led to our first step, and still carrying Him to every succeeding step—to every new effort, to every added word, to each separate undertaking.

PRAYER.

O God, in our sorrow let thine illuminating Truth come into our hearts. Cheer us with Thy presence, our covenant keeping Redeemer. Thou, O Jesus, art THE TRUTH, revealing the true nature of our Father. Thou art opposed to idolatry, Thou art full of mercy, Thy revelation has the back-bone of eternal justice. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." We thank Thee, O God, for the unspeakable Gift as the reconciler of man with God, as our high and bright example, and as that One who brings us from sin to the lofty platform of redemption and ability to accomplish holy purposes. O thou Almighty, grant us the Spirit of Truth to dwell within our hearts—to brighten our lives—to cheer our sorrows. Let us not readily forget that Christ the Truth hath authoritatively taught, "In my Father's mance are many mansions." For Christ's sake, O Father, forgive and bless us. AMEN.

“ When quiet in my house I sit,
Thy book be my companion still;
My joy thy sayings to repeat,
Talk o'er the records of thy will,
And search the oracles divine,
Till every heart-felt word be mine.”

THE BIBLE AND HIGHER CRITICS.

SERMON IV.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—PSALM cxix: 105.

We believe there is in this verse an endorsation by David of most of the books of the Bible which go before the Psalms. This writer refers to the Pentateuch, the book of Job, and the histories of the peculiar people which bring us to his own time. When Christ commands, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me," He has before his mind the writings of the Old Testament very much as we have them in the Hebrew Bible. He quotes again and again the words of Moses, as well as of the psalms and the prophets, and we have therefore to conclude these Scriptures to be stamped with the greatest authority.

Here indeed is our argument for the Bible. Christ, who is the highest known Teacher, quotes from the Sacred Volume and from no other. In His estimation it is divine. That is enough for me though countless able critics should have something to say against it. We have the greatest minds treating these pages as true. They look upon them as gold, tried in the fire, purged, and

becoming all the purer for the process. This is what we have to say to men, like modern agnostics, former infidels, no matter what the objection you have to Scripture, "There it stands accepted by the best and most genuine critic the world has yet seen." Let me say, we welcome learning to the task of expounding the word of God—provided it is reverential, thorough, and conducted with the view of making what is difficult plain and comprehensive. We know how little priest-craft did for even the circulation of Scripture, and that it was rather owing to the earnestness of certain men, who translated it into the English language in spite of persecution, that we have the book in its received shape. Priest-craft bitterly opposed its translation into the ordinary language, its circulation, and faithful exposition. It is certain to us the day has gone by for preventing the Word having free course. Whether we will or not the Bible is bound to be investigated and made clear. For our part we say give the scholars the utmost freedom within common sense. The more of such scholarship we have the better. We have the two schools of critical minds and they must have their way. They may appear in different proportions, but votes of the majority are not going to set aside the minority. We are sure in the long run of good coming from such controversy. While—being conservative—disposed to hold to the views of our fathers, we say let us give scholarship every opportunity, let us not oppose learned investigation, let us not try to crush the enquiring spirit. The Bible is certainly not to be put down because of scholarly criticism.

We must abide results. We see how many inexplicable matters have become plain because of such enquiries. Take, for example, the appendix chapter of the Pentateuch, containing an account of Moses' death. To the difficulty raised as to the authorship of the books, because Moses must then have written his own funeral oration, we have to say of course it was added by another hand. The story of Joshua and the Sun standing still may appear absurd to literal expositors, especially as with the aid of Science they can say it must rather have been the earth that stood still, seeing the relation of the Sun to our globe is caused by the motions of the latter. It is surely evident we have here a poetic description of the continuance of a day into the night, such as we have often witnessed. Whether the theory is to be applied of Moses not being the actual writer may be seen in the course of time, but to us there is no practical difficulty in regarding him the author even if proved that some other pen in an after time wrote the Pentateuch. If these writings were handed down from one to another in a traditional form until they were committed to writing, in our view they are no less the works of Moses. And so with other questions which have been started, such as whether there be two Isaiahs. While clinging to the old view of there being one writer filled with his glorious theme and growing in ardour and eloquence as he contemplated from afar the advent of Him who was "The Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace," we yet can see no change in the book itself, even though a double

authorship were established. It is to the merit of the book itself we have to look rather than its authorship. So in our view it is with regard to the life of Christ—if it can be proven that John did not write the fourth gospel, what difference does it make? The gospel of John speaks for itself. We do not think any other could have written such a marvellous product of the human mind. But even allowing that another was the author, is not the book true in itself? The one evil that results from pushing the alleged discoveries of Critics before the public mind, is that of leading ignorant persons to say, “surely if the scholars are themselves disagreed, the books are not worthy of credit.” That this has largely resulted no one can deny. There is danger of undermining merely traditional convictions. Men are apt to seize every difficulty and say, “the idea of a revelation is absurd.” We want to utter a word of what we call common sense on the subject before allowing such a conclusion. We deeply regret the alarming tendency of condemning the Bible on the mere ground of contradiction among the Critics, and as for us be it understood that having such a backing as that given by Christ to the Old Testament, we will stick to reading and admiring it as long as life lasts, and we hope to show that the New Testament is far too much a living gem to let it lightly go from our grasp. No, brethern, our old Bible which has an honored position in our churches, schools and colleges, is used as a symbol in taking oaths before courts of law, enjoys a foremost place in many societies, and is regarded as “a lamp to the feet and a light to the

path" by a vast number of God-fearing men and women, is too precious to be thus set aside. It is more in demand to day than ever, and we are not saying too much in expressing the belief it is destined as the years come and go to more and more regard. Let us look to its contents —to what it says—rather than puzzle over merely surface questions.

We remark God's word is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path," because, in the first place, it reveals *the true nature of sin*. With human depravity it deals as an entrance wedge. The teaching of the Bible is clear on this subject. Were the story of the Fall told only once in the beginning of Genesis, we might doubt the matter. But it is often repeated in the books of Scripture. David expresses the whole truth when he says, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." What have we in all these writings but the repetition of the doctrine that "sin is a reproach to any people" and that "the way of transgressors is hard"? We maintain the integrity of Scripture because its teaching on this point calls forth response from the human heart. There is correspondence between its doctrine and the universal experience. The moral law stands strongly and firmly in its place because the condition of men reveals its necessity. Its commands are not to do the very things we find in existence and which we believe came into the world through disobedience. The history of the Jewish people shows the necessity for the deliverance of such a code of morality. What is that history? Not only do murders,

and crimes against chastity, and the vilest deeds immediately appear, but we are told of wickedness attaining such a cumulative force that it reached its climax in the almost total destruction of the race by the flood. While that awful visitation swept away the iniquity which abounded, it did not destroy it. So that we find Noah, the chosen one who with his family was preserved from destruction, committing crimes too loathsome to name. And on we go with the history until the evil appears again in intensest forms, until anarchy and bloodshed and war are seen as its consequences. Many say they cannot believe there is a God because of the permission of wars which to them seem unjust. But what are such strifes and death and destruction but the logical issue of the sins which abounded? Do we think God can endure the horrors of idolatry, profanity, immorality, cruelty? Can a supreme Intelligence look calmly on such scenes and not let them come to their fit conclusion? Does not the extermination of races result because of their iniquities? Does God prosper the rebellion—leading to confusion—, the destruction of hosts, and the turning of all things upside down? Do we find the people of God victorious when taking part in wars that are wicked and unjust? Are they not conquerors when honoring the principles of the Divine government, and are they not defeated and scattered when fighting against God and truth? And for what are the prophets sent forth but to proclaim the evil which abounds and denounce it in God's name? Does not Isaiah cry. “Let the sinner forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts?”

Is not Jeremiah a doleful book because dealing with human perversity? What is the burden of all prophecy but the rebellion of men? And who teaches sin as an all prevailing evil more thoroughly than Christ? He came to convict men, to lift the vail, and show the horrors which abound. While loving men, He hates their sins. He denounces the Pharisee and hypocrite. The Bible doctrine concerning sin culminates in the apostle's declaration, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. v. 12. Were not the biographies of the saints given for the purpose of showing them to be sinners? There are a few no doubt on whom there is no mention in Scripture of stain or guilt, such as Abel, Enoch, Isaac, Joseph, Jonathan, Nathaniel, but in their very offerings, were they not confessing their unworthiness? But what a story is told of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses even, of Eli, of David and Solomon, and how few of the kings appear other than monsters of crime? What of the New Testament? Does not Paul confess himself, "the chief of sinners?" What of the apostles but the narrative of their desertion of Christ? Behold, Peter intimidated by a maiden and led to the denial of his Lord! What a testimony to the prevalence of sin in death which with two exceptions—Enoch and Elijah—has dug a grave for all mankind! Do we not feel that death is our lot because we have sinned and come short of the glory of God? The Scripture as a "light to the feet" presents to the believer the awful contrast of the darkness of sin from

which he has escaped, while it describes the gloom of a wicked course to rouse the sinner to repentance.

We remark the Bible to be “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path,” because it presents Him who is “the *Light* that cometh into the world.” Whether we accept Scripture or not, we cannot reject the Messiah. Jesus is a historical character. Countless writings other than the New Testament prove this. We say, further, had we no Bible, had it been possible to destroy it out of sight, we would still have had the Christ, and His sayings and doings would have been currently reported from mouth to mouth. The critical questions, referred to at the outset, settle nothing. The Saviour is the factor. Everything goes to show that He lived and took part in human affairs. Why do we date letters, newspapers, books 1895? Every time we write these figures it is acknowledging Christ. If John’s gospel had never been written, these words in some form would have been ringing in the air, “Had ye believed Moses, you would have believed me; for he wrote of Me.” Could the description of Christ’s person, words, character and death ever have been written, had no such person lived? We say that the invention of the Christ as a story without an actual person who dwelt on earth would have been superhuman, and the author or authors of it would be entitled to worship. No. Let us by criticism set aside the Bible, and there is still this person to be dealt with. Now what is the claim of this Jesus? It is that Moses wrote of Him. He tells us the prophets spoke concerning Him. And so, trying to grasp His words, we are led to see the

Old Testament presents Him as a person. We have to do, then, not with Moses, or David, or Isaiah, but with what is said, just as we have to do with Mathematics whether Euclid be the author or not. Endorsed by Christ the books of the Old Testament are to be read to discover this person. The form of the promise given in Genesis, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," is very striking. We have the object-lesson of Abraham offering his own son to be read with the words of the Saviour, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and was glad," and we must feel the ram which took the place of Isaac was one of the sacrifices by the patriarchs looking towards the coming Christ. What remarkable words uttered by dying Jacob—we believe—referring to this very person, "The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." What a title SHILOH, meaning according to some, PEACE, and how appropriately applied to Him who said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Moses wrote of some one individual when he said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken." Deut. 18:15. This was at once confirmed by God himself. That these words were fulfilled in Christ alone is evident from the fact that none of the prophets was a lawgiver, and Peter is not far wrong when applying them to the Saviour in the Temple after the miracle on the lame man. David and all the prophets from Samuel according to Peter speak of

one person as the coming Saviour. To whom does the King of Israel refer in his words but unto Him seen by all believers from afar, "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." "I have the Lord always before me—for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." We have such remarkable phrases in Proverbs and the Song of Solomon, as "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," "my beloved is mine and I am his," which are fulfilled in Christ better than any other. Isaiah is full of this single personage. We are familiar with his 53rd chapter, which, applied to Christ as we find Him in the gospels, is wonderful. They cannot be referred to any other. "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." What remarkable language in the 59th chapter, "For he put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head"! The prophet Jeremiah cries, "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?" and surely in doing so the *One* is before him. "I was wounded in the house of my friends," exclaims Zechariah applying his words to the Messiah. What a striking sentence uttered by Malachi, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings!" We are not trying skillfully to make out a theory of this one person being proclaimed by all the prophets, but accounting for the fact of there being long before Christ came an expectation with the

people that a certain individual would come to deliver them from sin and every malady. This was the earnest belief of the spiritual-minded. It only amounted with the mass to an expectation of a future king who would reign over them and deliver them from the foe. It was none the less a general anticipation of an important personage. So that about the time of the actual birth of our Lord, the people were looking for One to deliver them from the Roman authority. This cannot be questioned and hence we have to give weight to the meaning of the Saviour in applying the prophecies to himself and of the apostles in uttering many such words as we find in Hebrews, "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priest-hood." What a splendid title is this which Jesus claims when he says, "I am the Light of the World" !

And now let me say, in conclusion, no matter what the opposition of men to the word of God, no matter what alleged errors and difficulties critics may suggest upon mere questions of authorship, or as to certain passages which they assert to have been added to the original manuscripts, the Bible is to be esteemed "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path," because of what its revelation does for man. I believe we can never settle questions about original manuscripts, because all we can have is found in the books of Scripture as they are. But this we know from the Word that it "restores men to the joy of Salvation." And by this I understand it brings back our lost condition. What are we to think of restoration to complete manhood? The Bible tells us. He

who is the Light enforces this as the royal road to redemption,—“Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” These two things are concurrent. You cannot separate the one from the other. It is just turning away from sin to God. The moment we look to Jesus we turn from sin. The first thing we can do and which is at once intimately associated with faith is to repent. The truth of Scripture shows my sinfulness. The voice of conscience exclaims, “Thou art lost so long as thou continuest in wickedness.” There is only one thing to do in the presence of that light. It is repent. Depart with loathing from thine iniquity. The very hour in which a man turns from sin and believes on Jesus, he experiences the fact that he is “a new creation of God, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.” He is then “a man in Christ Jesus.” And what is meant by this? He is now in the Saviour what he would have been had he never fallen. Whatever remaining sin, after his guilt is purged and his heart is purified, there is now no condemnation. He is “justified by faith and has peace with God.” Fancy what must be the state of one whose soul is flooded with the light because the Holy Ghost is “working within him to will and do of God’s good pleasure.” A moral revolution has taken place in his heart. His affections are turned to higher and better things. Because risen with Christ he is now, “seeking those things which are above.” His thoughts are entirely changed. There may with many be honesty and fidelity towards their fellow-men before conversion. But what powers these become because now

consecrated to God! But think of the mass of men who "love darkness rather than light." What lusts occupy the breast? What passions are in force so that crimes of every name are done under the sun! Now such are transformed, and the very energy, and determination and perseverance, with which they pursued their evil courses, are turned in the direction of virtue and honorable dealing and benevolence. The world becomes new to them. Instead of looking at it in the light of ministering to their pleasure and ambition, it is now seen to be the creation of God. Its stones, and streams, and lakes, and mountains speak to them with other voices. They can now contemplate God in creation with restful satisfaction. They have a restored character—basking in the rays of that Light. They are living for a purpose—to glorify God and serve the interests of others. Having learned to love the Father they can exercise love to their fellow men. They lead unselfish lives. Their object is to do good—not abstractly—but in their business, in their homes, and in every possible way as they come in touch with others. They live a new life, breathe the fresh atmosphere, they are feeding themselves day by day on Him who is the bread of life. Their spiritual thirst is quenched because they are ever drinking the water of life from its perennial source. The Light of God does for them what the sun does for trees and flowers. It causes them to grow in wisdom and knowledge. They do not stop where they were, but are attaining heights of which formerly they were unconscious. Heaven is begun within them. They have now a "name to

live." They cannot have written upon their brows—failure, ruin, death. For they are conspicuously active in the true directions of man's energies. They are aiming to be like Christ. And what does the Light do for them? They are "brought to life and immortality through the Gospel" Their inward consciousness of life, not ending with death but passing into God's presence for judgment, is turned into peace and joy indeed. For they now see their immortal nature becoming enriched with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and they feel themselves to be "children of God—then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ." What must it be when a genuine manhood realizes itself not to be for the day, or the few years of this world's history, but *forever!* The floods of light coming from Christ and the Holy Ghost assure him of being begotten unto "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away." He who was but immortal is now deeded with Eternal Life. He knows that death means for him the crown of glory.

But what of thee, O sinner, who lovest darkness rather than light—who art still in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity? It is for thee not to settle such matters as are raised about the Scripture, but to deal *first* with the question, "why am I not a child of God?" It will be time to turn to original manuscripts when thou are sure of the new birth. Surely it is miserable carping with vital things to be practically denying the Saviour because of difficulties in or about the

Word. We do not act thus in regard to other sciences. Do we say there is no truth in astronomy, or geology, because of the contradictory statements of students of the one or the other? No, we wish to see every one firmly planted on the Rock and then we make bold to say that every book of Scripture will become illuminated and every sentence will prove a living gem.

All hail the glorious morn,
That saw our Saviour rise,
With victory bright adorned,
And triumph in his eyes;
Ye saints, extol your risen Lord,
And sing his praise with sweet accord.

HOLIDAY OR HOLY DAY—WHICH?

SERMON V.

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.—MARK ii. 27-28.

We do not feel like discussing such a question as that concerning the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week. The Jew, who has not come to the acceptance of the Messiah, is of course bound on grounds of patriotism to maintain the seventh day observance. He will be all the nearer the ancient standard of piety if scrupulous on this matter. For the words still stand on the Book, “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable—then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.” We hope for the conversion of such in proportion as they are mindful of the day which the Lord hath made. If those calling themselves Christian insist upon observing the Seventh, and not the first, we regard them going back rather than forward. If they have time on their hands and can observe both days in the public sense, well and good. But with the vast multitude, whose one day in the week is ever in danger of being torn from their grasp, it

is a matter of clinging to that which they have rather than attempting the impracticable and going back to the letter of the law. As our purpose is vastly other than that of dealing with the question, why there came the change from the seventh to the first, let us touch upon this just for a moment. We see the day was not altered at the whim of pope or priest, for there it is right before us in the New Testament. The resurrection of our Lord was evidently an event of such import as to involve many transformations, and amongst them the setting apart of one day to be its memorial. We can readily understand how the Jewish Christian, while keeping up a weekly remembrance of the Lord's resurrection, would yet stick to the old law of the seventh as much as possible. But the Resurrection so completely overshadowed creation that it became the absorbing thought. In searching for reasons for the change to the first day and demanding no less than words of Christ to authorize this, we forget it was made under His own supervision. For how else explain the appearances of our Lord to his disciples on the first day of the week—on the one occasion to all the disciples except Thomas and on the next to the eleven, demonstrating to the astonished doubter the fact of His resurrection. These we cannot help connecting with Paul's injunction to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xvi. 2) “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” There seems no doubt of the observance of the first day by meetings and worship, and so the Lord's day became a

distinctive title, as when John says in Rev. i. 10. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” It seems clear that with the sanction of the Lord himself a special emphasis was put upon the first day, and that under direction of the Holy Ghost the first day was from the beginning employed in some public manner to memorialize Christ’s rising from the dead. From Polycarp downwards it is the first day of the week which is observed for worship. There is no mention in history of any time when this day became of special significance. The practice grew. It grew out of the circumstances. The Sabbath has been observed through all the centuries on the first day, and it is interesting to learn from Missionaries throughout Asia Minor this day has the sanction of the ages in its favor. Whatever may be said, the first day is our Sabbath. If we are to contend for anything it is the first day. It is the Sabbath as we have it—the people’s inheritance—our most blessed possession. We observe, in the first place, that the Sabbath was made for man. If asked, to whom are we indebted for this day, we might reply—the church. It is an important fact that Protestant Christendom is almost a unit in this matter. We either are or ought to be united in regard to the day. The Roman Catholics are with us to a certain extent—contented for the most part with a few hours for worship and devoting the rest to pleasure. But do we imagine that the Church of herself would have thought of such an institution in its regularly recurring weekly observance? We have to go back of the Church to God himself as the

Author of Sabbath. The origin of the day is beautifully told in Genesis. We have in the first chapter an inspired ode—setting forth the order of events in creation. Some contend from their geological discoveries that each day represents an indefinite period. While not disposed to favor this theory, it does not affect the question of the Sabbath. For if Monday is a symbol of countless years during which one layer of earth was constructed, then the Sabbath would stand for the illimitable time during which God is revealing his Salvation. The world's history since the Fall would be the Sabbathic age of which the seventh day until the resurrection of Christ was made the type. The Sabbath would then be as authoritative as any one of the six days. But we rather think the account of the world up to the week which closed with the creation of man is contained in the 1st and 2nd verses of Gen. i, and that the division into days marks the preparation of the earth as an abode for man. The Lord then is set forth as giving light one day, and separating the water from the dry land another, and so on with the rest. At last the work fittingly terminates with the formation of man, and we are told, "God blessed the Sabbath and hallowed it." Thus the seventh day was secured to man by none other than the Creator. He foresees all things needed for our race, and so He guards the day for worship and service. Had man not fallen it would have made no difference. The six days would have been employed in working the soil and turning to account the earth's products. And there would have been a day of complete rest at the close

of each week, when the souls of men would have been lifted up in praise. There would in that case never have been question raised concerning the Sabbath. But it is clear to the Bible student the Sabbath is continued after the fall, and while the children of Israel in their Egyptian bondage had to toil on with no day of rest and were compelled to double their tasks and make bricks without straw, yet during the wilderness period there is by Divine command the resumption of the Sabbath, and the observance of the day is made imperative by the incorporation of the fourth commandment into the moral law, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." While the other nations might be groaning in their bondage and forced to labor on all days alike, the Jewish people were, when obedient and loyal to God, faithful in honoring their Sabbaths, and you can readily see the horrors of slavery and corruption which followed the neglect to keep God's day.

The two features of the day thus made for man—were rest and worship. "Even them (i. e. who keep the Sabbath) will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar, for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." The MAKER of the Sabbath had in view rest from toil. What tender solicitude on the part of the Creator for his creatures, that He thus appoints this weekly rest ! What must life be without Sunday but a weary, toiling, monotonous round ! God protested all along against labor—continuous, depressing. But let us try to conceive

the blessings of the Sabbath when Saturday night comes, “Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale,” the weekly rest is intended to begin. Then the Sabbath itself is to be marked by cessation from labor, except what may be necessary. But would man at his best be satisfied with merely resting his body? Is it intended he should sleep all day? Nay, you must read the injunctions to attend to the duties of religion on that day as on no other. While God is to be worshipped every day in the family according to Joshua, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” it is peculiarly fitting to have one day in which to be glad, when they said, “let us go up to the house of God.” Yes! there is the true idea of rest, for after sufficient sleep and enjoyment, the soul of man cannot be satisfied with other than the Bread of life.

PART II.

We wish to speak briefly, in the second place, of the tendency to make our Lord's sentence read, "man was made for Sabbath, and not the Sabbath for man." What would that mean? It would signify that man can do just as he pleases on Sabbath, or on the Lord's day,—or Sunday as they prefer to call it. It is my weekly holiday and I can do with it what seems to me best. I do not know why *holy day* has become *holiday*, (that is spelt with an i instead of y), unless it is by reason of the claim made by many to spend the day as they choose. The word thus spelt—*holiday*—seems to fit in with this idea—although we cannot see it is different from *holy day*, except in sound. The words are the same. We have, however, to do with this assertion of right to use the day according to caprice. In our view the prevalent non-observance of Sabbath as a time for rest and worship is alarming. We have to acknowledge, while mourning what may be called secularisation of the day, or departure from its proper purposes, what a small number, relatively, who are attending the churches! Contrast with this the throngs flocking to the piers on our hot Sundays and crowding steam vessels which ply to the different places along our sea coasts and on our rivers. We know well what is taking place when they get there—to Coney Island or Rockaway for example. All the saloons are doing a rushing business. Merry-go-rounds and every other means of amusement are in demand. A vast business for the

sale of every imaginable thing is being carried on. Of course, the less objectionable recreation from bathing, boating is carried on to an immense extent. The results we feel certain are not satisfactory even to such as behave well. They are often delayed in their return to the city. The boats are dangerously overcrowded. Conversation for the most part is about the day's experience or other subjects of a secular kind. Those well behaved are compelled to witness scenes which are far from edifying. When they reach home they are weary and worn, and on Monday feel in anything but good condition for resuming their work. But what shall we say of the drunkenness which manifest itself, of the profane swearing, of the sweat and toil of sin? It is a sad sad tale. Monday sees the multitude of pleasure—seekers in no fit shape for the toils of the week, and the debauch is too frequently continued. What do we witness in our City life? Is it not the claim of man being made for the Sabbath showing itself in countless forms of pleasure seeking. Our cars are crowded from morn till eve. The people are determined to enjoy themselves, and every conceivable conveyance is in demand. They are rushing from the City in every direction to get the fresh air, as they say. But the saloon again is the popular resort, and we know the results. The travellers jostle and selfishly struggle for the best places. There are continual confusion and wars of words and disturbance. Behold them jaded, worn out, far from rested, at the close of the day! Is this the best way of spending Sabbath as preparation for the week's require-

ments? There is a large class—playing base ball, running races on the bicycle, indulging in all sorts of bodily exercise. They say, they are doing it to promote health—to enjoy the out-door exercise they are denied during the week. There is no secret about side-doors by which to enter saloons in this and many another city. The business is openly done. We have no knowledge of the actual number resorting to these for drink and amusement, but it must be very large. The question is being agitated what to do with the saloon. Shall we allow it to be open as in London during certain hours of the day? Well, all this means that large masses of people are resolved to make what use of the Sabbath they like best.

They say it is their weekly holiday and theirs to do with as they will. But we maintain it is *not* their day in that sense. It is God's day to be spent as He would have it. We owe it largely to our churches that we have such a period. No one can deny this who thinks on the subject. We certainly do not owe the Sabbath to worldly men. These may talk eloquently about the working men's Sunday, but have never lifted even their little finger on behalf of the toilers. Whether allowed or not by those most interested in the weekly holiday, we maintain it to be absolutely certain they owe the day to religion or in a word to God.

At the same time, we do not plead for a severe puritanic Sabbath. We do not come upon a single passage of Scripture encouraging such a notion. Let us not think ourselves doing God service because we close down our blinds and shutters, hermetically seal our pianos, entertain

the idea of laughter being sin. We believe the Sabbath was made for man—to give him needed rest—to allow sufficient bodily exercise, to enjoy the free air and bright sunshine readily within reach. But we cannot believe that pleasure seeking is other than laborious. We would have Sunday a specially happy family day. The parents have time to spend upon the intellectual and spiritual training of their children. Innocent amusements, looking to Bible instruction, could be had by these little ones. We rejoice in Sunday Schools, while deprecating the notion of parents being thereby relieved of the duty of teaching their offspring. The Sabbath School is indeed a grand factor. Think what these teachers are doing for our young—not merely taking them from the streets and places of questionable resort, but giving instruction.

One word more. By turning away from God's Sabbath, paying no regard to the purposes for which it was given and making it a day of pleasure, we are in danger of losing it. On the one side the Lord gives inspiring promise to those who observe His day, saying, "Thus saith the Lord unto them that keep my Sabbath will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name. I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." Isa. lvi. 16. On the other side God says, "Did not your fathers thus profane the Sabbath, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this City? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." Neh. xiii. 18. And again, "The Lord caused the Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion, "Lam. ii. 6. and "I

will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her *Sabbaths*, and all her solemn feasts." Hos. ii. 11. But you say, this severity and such a sentence have passed away, because we have not the Sabbath as Israel had it. The day is changed and has become one for enjoyment. For our part, the Lord's day is our Sabbath. It has attached to it not only all the sacredness pertaining to the original day of rest, but reverence and love toward the Lord Jesus, of whose resurrection it is a fitting memorial. Moreover, God's commandments are not a burden. The path of true enjoyment lies in keeping them. On the one hand, it is evident as daylight that the proper observance of the Sabbath ensures its continuance. Let us walk and keep the day as the Lord would have us and we need not fear losing it. When men are alive to the privileges of the day, they will strenuously resist every attempt on the part of worldly men to wrest the Sabbath from the toiling multitude.

But what, let me ask, is to be expected from turning the day into one of pleasure—and forgetting the hallowed end for which it was instituted? The results of this are before our eyes. What a vast number forced to labor on the Lord's day, because of this demand for enjoyment! You cannot sail these steam vessels, you cannot run these cars, without compelling others to work. It is alarming to think of the inroads on Sabbath already made, and the mass who have to toil to satisfy the general desire for sensuous, if not sensual, gratification. We can hardly exaggerate on this matter. It is not only New York and

neighboring cities upon which our eye is set, but behold, how this pleasure seeking covers the entire land. Considering the saloons and places of amusement open on the Lord's day, the actual number laboring must be indeed great. We must remember this evil thus appears at the present moment in spite of the continual efforts of the Church and State to preserve the day of rest. What would it be if there was no restriction whatever and those who run theatres, concert rooms and various place of resort were allowed to do as they list? The wickedness is undoubtedly growing in this very direction. Attempts to throw the doors of these places wide open on Sabbath have been made again and again. By and by, if such encroachments are permitted we will have our New England Sabbath turned into a Sunday as it is in France. God forbid we say, for what does this mean?

It signifies the obliteration of distinction between Sunday and Saturday. It means open stores on Sundays—the carrying on of all kinds of business, until we have the two classes—the one, the pleasure seekers, compelling fellow-men and women to toil on the holy day, and the other, the toilers themselves—those obliged to go through a perpetual, unbroken cycle of labor during all the seven days of the week. That means the hallowed day becoming one of intemperance on a vast scale, of unbridled lust, of servile work for the multitude. And do you think that men will ever concede to giving a holiday now and again as a substitute for the loss of Sunday, or so arrange the time of service as to make work

on this day only occasional? That is not *our* experience, working men. What we now see—the chains holding your bodies to suffering and anguish becoming thicker, the pressure upon your liberty becoming severer, life getting to be a sad burden through over-work, until hope is gone from you and despair seats itself proudly over you,—these will become your lot in still severer forms. There is the logical issue of what is now going on before our eyes, and the question before the laboring classes is, whether by due observance of the Sabbath they will secure its privileges, or by yielding to passion and libertinism they will permit the day of rest for them to become a thing of the past.

O Master, it is good to be
High on the mountain here with Thee,
Where stand revealed to mortal gaze
Those glorious saints of other days.
Who once received on Horeb's height
The eternal laws of truth and right,
Or caught the still small whisper, higher,
Than storm, than earthquake, or than fire.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

SERMON VI.

MATT. xvii., 1-8. MARK ix., 2-8. LUKE ix., 2-8.

The very first expression in the passage of Scripture now read connects the transfiguration with the declaration, which the Lord made concerning his approaching sufferings. “*And after six days,*” (the Evangelist narrates), “Jesus taketh Peter, James and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain.” St. Mark says the same thing; and St. Luke with a slightly different expression, “It came to pass about an *eight days* after these sayings,” signifies the same thing. There is no contradiction between St. Matthew and St. Mark on the one hand and St. Luke on the other—Matthew and Mark recording *six clear days* as having elapsed, and St. Luke taking into his summation the day preceding and the day following this hiatus of *six days*, as the days on which the *two* events which are connected respectively occurred. We know not what happened between the prophecy the Lord made regarding His final doom, and the event of the Transfiguration. But it is one of the examples with which the Scriptures are filled, of the human and divine nature of our Saviour being placed side by side in vivid contrast.

At one time we find Him showing “unto his disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed,” and then we have to follow the footsteps of our Lord and His disciples as they strike into the solitudes of the mountain, on which the wonderful event of the Transfiguration took place. Let us draw near and gaze with reverence upon the scene so strikingly depicted by the *three Evangelists*.

St. Luke states the purpose of the Saviour in thus retiring into the mountain. “He went,” he says, “to pray.” This should be borne in mind in considering the Transfiguration, for we think it goes far to explain it. It would seem that Christ was in the habit of going into the mountains for prayer and meditation. It was on a mountain He preached to His disciples the greatest of sermons, and there He taught them to pray after the manner of His own model prayer. The sacred historian informs us that after performing the miracle of feeding the multitudes, “When He had sent them away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come He was there alone.” And so on many other occasions we have reason to believe that Christ secluded himself in the deep recesses of the mountain sides, and there unseen by human eye, let His hearts’ desires and meditations ascend to His Father. It is probable that the solitariness of the Redeemer was brightened by many Transfiguration scenes, and that in the event before us, as recorded, we have a glimpse of what He was in His spirit-

ual exaltations. At all events we should not overlook the important lesson here presented, viz : that Jesus Christ was in fullest sympathy and accord with nature, that the mountain side, or wilderness, or lonely sea-shore afforded Him a congenial retreat where He might pour out His heart before the Father, and that with Him it needed not the cloistered cell or some sequestered or consecrated spot, to commune with heaven. This habit of the Saviour we should regard as a worthy example. There is without doubt great value in stated seasons and places for retirement and solitary thought. We are the creatures of habit, and must ever associate the routine of duty with fixed appointments. But there is danger connected with this, that we become cold, methodical, and crush within us those human impulses which give to prayers and meditations the zest of genuine enjoyment. If we cannot pray but in the closet, if we cannot meditate except in the hermitage, we suspect we are still at some distance from the Kingdom of God. We will substitute monasticism for devotion, penance for penitence, works for faith. But let us have the spirit of the Master, and all nature will present herself as a Temple in which we may offer the incense of prayer ; the lonely mountain-peak may become a consecrated altar ; the solitudes of the wilderness will be enjoyed as our confessional ; the stars will be regarded by us as the very windows of heaven, through which ministering angels are watching us ; the winds and the waves will sing to us with celestial strains. Wherever we are placed the still, small voice will be always whispering in our ears.

Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John into an exceeding high mountain. With the question as to whether this was Mount *Tabor* or Mount *Hermon*, we will only say that the balance of evidence seems to be in favor of Hermon. Hermon is an exceeding high mountain, while Tabor was inhabited to the very top. Hermon lay close to where Jesus was at the time of the Transfiguration, while Tabor was at a considerable distance. Hermon's lofty peak was crowned with the snows of ages, suggesting evidently St. Mark's description, "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow." Turn from this to the persons by whom our Lord was accompanied on the occasion of the Transfiguration. These were three of His disciples, who by their differing tempers and mental qualities were peculiarly fitted to act the part of witnesses of the grand transactions about to take place. Here we have not only the number of witnesses required by law, but so constituted that if the event had not occurred, and was only imaginary or a mere vision, they must have contradicted one another in their account of it. Without having been present at an actual occurrence, Peter—the fearlessly honest—could not have written as he afterwards did concerning it, "We were witnesses of His Majesty, for He (Jesus Christ) received from God the Father, honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory. 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,' and this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount." James was the first

martyr, who died for his faith in Christ. He is thus to be esteemed for his bold and unwavering truthfulness. John, again, as the disciple whom Jesus loved and who lived to the age of upwards of a hundred years in faithful and affectionate witnessing to Christ, furnishes testimony most precious to all who, like him rest on the Saviour's breast. These three witnesses severally commend themselves to the Heathen, the Sceptic, and to Believers, and their united testimony is of great value in determining the reality of the Transfiguration. May we not well exclaim, in view of the special favor conferred upon them, what a privilege to accompany Jesus and see Him in the act of praying! It was night; and now that deep shadows had wrapped the mountain and the sublime silence of the hour was felt—unbroken except by the rustling leaf, the whirl of the startled bird, or the dripping of water from the projecting crag—what a precious opportunity was afforded for beholding Christ in the highest exercises of His soul! Yet, strange to say, as St. Luke tells us, that “Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.” What! exclaim some of you, asleep in such company! Yes, the frailties of the flesh are indeed great, that sleep should overtake one when about to receive the greatest boon. But they were doubtless worn out with the fatigues of the day. They were overcome with the journey. They shared not the spiritual exaltation of the Master. The sweet breath of a summer’s wind, and the gentle rays of stars—as well as the holy engagements of the Lord—all sung with monot-

onous cadence their souls into deep sleep. Meanwhile the praying manner of their Lord is lost to sight. Precious words fell soundless on their slumbering ears. While it was natural to sleep at such an hour, yet it involved the loss of those lofty thoughts which were poured into the Heavenly Father's ear. What a contrast between the sleeping disciples and the vigilant Master! But let us not blame them—who when our souls are blunted with worldly engagements and our bodies drag on our jaded minds—sleep away the valuable moments of divine worship, or become unconscious while we are listening to the words of some valued friend. Jesus does not rebuke them by word or look, and perhaps it was because He, feeling for them, allowed them to rest awhile that they might be well prepared to witness the sublime spectacle that was about to pass before them.

St. Luke informs us, “that as He prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.” The words of St. Matthew are, “He was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” While St. Mark says, “his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them.” The disciples, awaking out of sleep, now witness this wonderful change. We are to remember in attempting to explain this event, that Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, and that he was thus employed when sleep fell upon the eyes of his three followers. If we connect the Transfiguration with the fact that He was praying, we will at

once concede the change was not brought about by some external cause. The rationalist makes easy work of the explanation by saying that the rays of the setting or rising sun fell upon Him, and lit up His face, and were reflected from his garments. But the apostles would not have been awe-struck as they were at sight of their transformed Master, though it must be confessed that light at certain seasons is followed by strange and startling results. We have seen it throwing a weird like mantle of beauty over scenery, which at another time would scarcely attract attention. Has it not to the eye of the traveller changed the desert into a sea of glass, or robed the barren mountain with garments of silver and gold? But something more than this is involved in the Transfiguration of our Lord. He had risen through his praying moods, from one degree of spiritual intensity to another, till all that was Divine within Him was expressed in His countenance and form. We have seen some of our fellow-beings passing through intense excitement of sorrow or joy, and they were so changed to our eye that we could hardly recognize them. Does not conversion often produce a marvellous change in the appearance—imparting a new light to the eye and irradiating the countenance? Take the Christian as he is engaged on the Lord's Day in the exercises of the Sanctuary, and it may be that in the sacred hymn, or by a thought from the preacher, his soul is wafted upwards, and catching the light of Heaven, there is given to the eye a peculiar brilliancy, which it knows not in its ordinary moods. Let any one engage in some ennobling work of

charity, and all his love seems to settle upon his countenance, and to impart to it a new expression. Or look at the transforming power of mind in the artist at the moment he conceives the living idea which his skilled hand will afterwards impress on canvass or on marble; or in the poet when words give wings to his thoughts, and these are poured forth in forms that will live forever; or in the inventor as he discovers some hidden principle in nature, and applies it to the machine or instrument. They are changed for the time from their ordinary look and expression. Their thoughts, looking out at the windows of the eyes, fill them with a wondrous light. Now, apply this well recognized principle to the Saviour, and suppose Him to have been, as some persons say, a man namely, but the noblest and the best of men,—a man reaching in his Transfiguration prayer the loftiest altitudes of spiritual excitement, a man whose one thought was to fulfill in his lifetime the mission of doing good, now approaching the throne of God in the utterances of his soul. At such a moment would he not be transformed indeed! We cannot imagine the appearance He would have presented—his eyes turned heavenwards and enkindled with the light of God's love, his countenance irradiated by the intensity of an inward joy, his frame electrified with emotional excitement. What a sublime spectacle! But when we add to this that He was the *Beloved Son of God*, that He was the brightness of the Father's glory, that in Him the human and the divine existed in perfect harmony, that when at such a moment all that was Divine in Him rose

through the spiritual law of affinity to the Father on His throne, when for the time He was reinvested with all the glory He had from the beginning with the Father, when His soul exulted in the contemplation of that infinite Love which gave Him to this world, when before His aspiring mind there rose the grand and glorious kingdom of redeemed souls He was to conquer and make His own, when there was presented to His gaze the honor and glory that would be gained from His completed work, when for the time being the spirits of enmity could not touch Him, and He was ministered unto by His heavenly legions, we may well conclude it is no exaggerated description which the Evangelist gives when he says, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." Was it not this heavenly light that shone in the face of Moses when he came down from the mount, and that made Aaron and all the children of Israel afraid to come unto him? Was not this the holy light that was reflected from Stephen when all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel? But how much more startling and brilliant must it have been with Jesus, when the rays of the Divine Glory fell upon Him from heaven, and there was enkindled to its highest point of intensity the divine light that was within Him. It was the one view these disciples had of what the Lord was in His divine nature, of the honor and glory which belong to Him, and of the greatness and majesty that would be His forever after His redeeming work was done. It was a revelation of what the angels and redeemed in heaven were

at that moment, of their exalted rank, of their glorified countenances, and it was a foretaste to them of the happy time when they “as the righteous would shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.” Some may require the aid of physical light to help them realize the spectacle of the transfigured Lord ; but surely we may conceive it to have been for these disciples a passing glimpse of what Christ is now in the kingdom of glory, seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, surrounded with attending legions of angels, bearing in His hand the sceptre of righteousness, and crowned with the everlasting crown of countless ransomed souls saved by the precious blood of Calvary.

Immediately upon this manifestation of the glory of Christ, “behold there appeared unto him Moses and Elias talking with them.” This may be viewed either as an actual occurrence, or as a vision. Considered as merely a vision, the lesson conveyed is appropriate and significant. Indeed, it is the very same lesson that would be taught on the theory of this being a real occurrence. The objection to this being considered a dream is, that the disciples were now wide awake, having probably been aroused out of sleep by the extraordinary light. We incline rather to the explanation that in this universe of sublime mysteries there are ever near and around us the beings of another world, who might be perceived by us were there given to us an increase of spiritual vision. Samuel after death appeared to Saul the king. Angels visited our earthly scenes during a

large portion of Old Testament history and held intercourse with many of God's children. It was no vain boast that Christ could summon to his aid twelve legions of angels, for had they not ushered in His advent by their swelling song, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will amongst men?" Angels came and ministered unto Him after the signal triumph he gained over Satan. Were there not bright heavenly messengers watching the holy place where his body lay? In the same way Stephen beheld the Lord Jesus when he was being stoned to death, and he cried to him, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And what of Saul when with rage and hatred he pursued his way to Damascus to put to death all who professed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he suddenly beheld the eye of Jesus looking upon him, and heard a voice, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" We prefer, then, the interpretation that Moses and Elijah were really present with Christ in the midst of the scenes of his transfiguration. Had this visitation not occurred, the tableau of Christ attended by Moses and Elijah must be viewed as a grand conception of the human mind. But as we doubt not its reality, let us now endeavor to point out its purpose. Let us for a moment imagine the group as they appeared to the eyes of the disciples. There is Christ the central figure in a blaze of heavenly light. Here, Moses, whose body was spirited away from the idolatrous Israelites, and there Elijah, who tasted not of death, but mounted up

to the Heavenly Kingdom on a flaming chariot of fire ! Moses and Elijah shining with light which fell from the Lord's countenance and garments ! These are fit companions for the Lord during His transfiguration glory ; Moses, on the one hand, the illustrious lawgiver, in his meekness and wisdom, a striking type of Christ ; Moses and Christ in loving counsel, the exponents of John's suggestive commentary, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Moses, Christ and Elijah in happy concourse, an embodiment of what the Lord uttered in His sermon on the mount, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.' Moses in this group pointing to Christ intimates that, the law which he declared from God, is fulfilled in the Messiah. Elijah, as the worthy representative of all the prophets, gives Peter scope to say in his memorable address to Cornelius, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." For you will notice, my brethren, the important words in the description of St. Luke, "and behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias ; who appeared in glory, and *spake of his decease which he would accomplish at Jerusalem.*" These words explain the joy and glory of Christ at this moment, as reflected in his face shining and his garment white as light. It was the death which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem, which during the past week he had so clearly intimated to his disciples, that was

filling his soul with holy excitement and ennobling desire. It was his death which was the theme of his converse, *the death* that had been prefigured in the sacrifices made under the appointment of Moses when he was in the flesh. It was that death which had inspired the souls of prophets when they sung as did Isaiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." If the angels desire to look into these things, what more lofty theme could have occupied the attention of Jesus, Moses and Elijah than the death which was to accomplish the deliverance of mankind from sin and guilt? And it is a most suggestive part of this narrative which tells us that after the voice of God was heard, saying, "This is my Beloved Son," Moses and Elijah disappeared, and left the central figure standing alone in all the conscious dignity and majesty, which had been inspired in Him in his manifested glory. The light of the Lawgiver and Prophet merges in the bright shining of the Saviour, and is no longer seen in presence of Him who is the Light of the World; even as the feebler rays of the stars can no longer be discerned when the sun has risen in his splendor. The grand central truth of the Transfiguration scene may be summed up in these words. "*This is Christ, who is far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*"

It is characteristic of Peter that he can speak at such a moment as this. James and John were of a different mould, and were too deeply impressed by the Transfiguration glory to think of uttering a single word. Thus was Peter all through his career—forward, impulsive, ever the first to break the silence with his tongue. Who was the foremost to confess that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, without thinking on the full meaning of his words? Which of the disciples rebuked the Master as he prophesied of His death at Jerusalem? Was it not Peter? And it was Peter, when Christ came to the disciples walking on the sea, who asked to be permitted to walk also. It was the same disciple who made the strongest protestation that he would follow Christ to the bitter end. It is true St. Mark and St. Luke state that on the occasion of the Transfiguration scene Peter did not know what he said. He is, therefore, a fit type of all those who speak without thinking, who must always be talking, and who do not know what reverential silence means. And yet his words had surely some intention in them. What did he say? “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus. Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” He wanted an impossibility,—that this scene should last forever, that Christ should continue always in this Transfiguration glory, and there was the mistake that such glorified beings required for this purpose the ordinary dwellings of men, such as tents or tabernacles. The Transfiguration was not intended to last forever. It was a single event, given

for the purpose of confirming the disciples' faith, and of strengthening the Lord himself. It would have unfitted these disciples for taking part in the affairs of the world. As it was, it was an earnest of the glory that was reserved for Christ after His redemption work was finished. It was a revelation to these disciples of the majesty of Him whom they were permitted to serve, before He would come to the last act of His life's drama, and put off His divinity that He might stoop to shame and death. It was also an interpretation of that death which they would afterwards remember when their Lord had risen to His everlasting glory, of which the Transfiguration was a symbol and foretaste. To have stayed on the mount and been made spectators of a whole panorama of Transfigurations, would have demanded an unwarrantable number of miracles which would have answered no real good purpose. Besides, there was selfishness in the request. Peter thought not of the disciples who were left behind. He did not reflect upon the wonderful hold Christ had on men's hearts, and upon the continued benefaction he was to the world's sufferers. He did not realize that Christ had a mission, and that mission was to be fulfilled not on the mountain tops, but in the lowly plains and in the crowded thoroughfares where men dwelt. He was the kind and good Physician who must be amongst His patients. He was the Teacher who must be surrounded by listeners. He came to this world not for the glorification of Peter, but for the salvation of sinners. Peter's latent thought was for himself, as it was all along, as it was when he desired to

walk on the water, and when he too rashly vowed he would not deny his Master. There is a valuable lesson read to us here. When we are enjoying the calm and rest of our transfiguration mount, the holy Sabbath day, when our souls are borne upwards with the inspirations of God's house, when we feel that God's Sanctuary is a banqueting chamber, and that "in this mountain the Lord of hosts makes a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," we are apt to say let us make here our tabernacles for a perpetual residence. We think how much better it would be to be exercised uninterruptedly with spiritual things. We would pray always. We would be always singing. It would be a constant communion of the saints. Men have tried this on a small scale, and as individuals, and have failed. Men have tried it on a large scale, and as communities, such as the monks, and have failed. If the Church could be made a perpetual dwelling-house, there would be no need of heaven. The services of God's house are intended for rest and refreshment, and to fit us for the practical duties of life. We must go down from the mount of ordinances to our homes and stores and factories—the mother to her routine cares, the child to his tasks, the husband to the sweat and toil of life. What a blessing indeed the Sabbath! but it would be without meaning were there not the six days of toil. What a happiness the Church, but it would pall upon our dull spiritual senses were we not obliged to earn our bread. We are to sing and pray that we may work all the better

for it. And we have to remember that while we might be standing on the mount, what of our brothers and sisters toiling below? We must go out from the church that we may draw in others. We must leave our pews and do as Andrew did—bring his brother to Christ. We must leave our home in the Church, and take our journey, that like the good Samaritan we may be in the way of doing good—helping the feeble, soothing the suffering, and throwing our arms around the dying.

It was sufficient rebuke of Peter's forwardness that no answer was made to his request. The scene was not completed. There was more of wonder in store for these favored witnesses. “While Peter yet spake, behold a white cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him.’” We understand by these words that for the time the cloud came between the transfigured form of Christ and the three disciples—overshadowing them and hiding Him from their gaze. It was a bright cloud, as if the whole Divinity were concentrated on one point. Let us remember that a cloud was the chosen symbol of God. It was in the cloud of pillar and fire that God moved forward, leading the hosts of Israel. We read the Lord said unto Moses, “I come unto thee in a thick cloud.” The prophet Isaiah says, “The Lord rideth on a thick cloud.” And the Saviour, in referring to His second coming, declares that “the Son of Man shall be seen coming in a cloud.” God thus veiled himself, because no sinful man could look on his face and

live. Behind that cloud all that was divine in Christ merged into the divinity of the Father, and they were one, as they had been from all eternity, and as they would continue to be, after the sacrifice of the cross was accomplished. It was a sight which these three witnesses could not have beheld and lived. It is the glorious spectacle which is reserved for God's children in heaven, when they shall be like God and see Him as He is. But while God cannot show Himself to fleshly creatures, He can make Himself heard. He spoke to Adam in Paradise. He gave special directions to Abraham. He addressed Moses from the midst of the burning bush. He imparted to him the two tables of commandments. He broke the silence of the heavens at the baptism of our Lord, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In almost the same words God now addressed these disciples, adding, "hear ye Him," that is, listen to my Son's instructions. Be obedient to His commandments. Follow Him. Be His witnesses. We may explain the voice of God speaking to men in either of two ways; either, first, as God expressing Himself by means of particular sound, or as God teaching us His thoughts through our consciousness. If the latter, the impression is so vivid to those who are accustomed to employ speech and language that we think it is a voice speaking to us. I am sure some of us have felt at times as though God were calling to us. In the silence of the night, as we lie awake, thinking of God, of heaven, and eternity, who has not felt as though someone were speaking? We are some

times startled by apparent sounds which we afterwards are convinced were but the fancies of the mind. In reading the works of some well known preacher, I seem to hear his voice as a distinct aural sensation. Let the words of some familiar hymn come into your mind, and the tune to which it is sung will seem as still sounding in your ear. God is speaking to us every day, and some of us are so constituted that we cannot help thinking we now hear His voice. But while this is true, and while this theory does not in the least militate against the Scriptural statement that a voice was heard, it is obvious to remark that there is no well known reason why God may not speak to men, as they speak to one another. He commands the lightning and thunder. He created the air by which sound is conducted. He constructed that most delicate organ the ear, and adapted it to the atmosphere. He made the voice, and gave to it all its wonderful variety of tones. And can He not speak, who made His creatures speak? These words of the Father, "This is my beloved Son," give meaning to the whole scene. It is a second declaration of the Sonship, and spoken to these three that in aftertimes they might be impressed by it, and that they might be able to interpret to others the meaning of His death. But for the voice the vision might have faded from their minds. The words fixed upon them the transfiguration scene. These words were instructive—revealing to them the mystery of the incarnation—preparing them for the reception of the Gospel of Christ, and giving them vantage ground as preachers of that Gospel.

But the immediate effect of the voice was that the disciples fell on their face and were sore afraid. How true this is to human nature. Men are more affected by sounds than by sights. They are more readily startled by words. Peter was silent enough now, though he was not restrained by reverence from breaking in upon the grandeur of the transfiguration scene by unseasonable words. He could not have spoken any more. They fell on their face—surely a becoming attitude for humble and sinful men. They were sore afraid, because of an experience so unwonted. And yet they had stood beside Christ as he turned the water into wine, as he raised the dead, as he fed the multitudes, and had no fear.

Long would they have lain on the ground had not Jesus come and touched them, and said, “Arise, and be not afraid.” It is the same gentle companion that speaks now as spoke to them all the time. It is the same loving friend. It is He who strengthens and comforts them in the midst of their fears. It is He who rose up in the majesty of His strength and rebuked the winds and the sea. It is He who came walking to them on the waters, at each step treading down the boisterous wave, and saying “Be not afraid. It is I.” It is He who promised them where two or three should be gathered together in His name, He would be with them. It is He who said, before He ascended up on high, “Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” And it is this Jesus who comes to us now in our sorrows, and says, “Arise, and be not afraid.” Let us keep in mind that

His promise is to be with us in all circumstances, and that, in faith of this we, with the apostle Paul, may be able to say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Comforted and assured by the loving words of their Master, “they lifted up their eyes and saw no man, save Jesus only.” The transfiguration scene was over. Moses and Elijah were no longer visible. The strange voice had ceased. There was Jesus only. That is, only Jesus as He was. He is the very same person still, notwithstanding that so much honor had just been given Him. But Christ is no less a king before, than He was after, His kingly enthronement. He who took sinners by the hand down amongst the dwellings of men is still the same after His coronation glory, and will be more a helper of the suffering than ever. And He is the same Jesus to these disciples, that He had been before and always. They might feel it is well with us that, the strange sights and sounds and personages having passed away, we have Jesus only with us. I think this is very suggestive. We are now on the holy mount—witnessing to one another our love for the Saviour—there are wafted into our ears the sweet sound of praise. We have had Moses and Elijah present to our thoughts, and maybe some of you have been looking up into other scenes, of which this Church and its services are emblematical. Perhaps God has spoken to you from out of His cloud! And in a few moments more this congregation shall have parted—these sounds

of music shall have died away—the vision of the glorified beings who sing round the throne of God shall have gone—the ladder we have seen going up from this altar to the throne of Heaven, on which we beheld angels ascending and descending, shall have disappeared, and well for us if, then we see Jesus only—have Him with us for our companion and guide. I remember on one occasion being deeply impressed with this thought. The Academy of Music in Philadelphia was crowded to the doors, speakers stood upon the platform, and in uttering their thoughts, it seemed none other than the still small voice of God addressing men. It was a dazzling spectacle. At length the meeting closed, and I remember waiting till these thousands had melted out of sight, and standing alone in that immense chamber with but few of the lights still burning, methought Jesus only is here to bless and keep me. Yes, brethren, it is our comfort to know, when dear ones have passed away from us, that JESUS IS OURS. May we not say of ourselves as was said of the disciples, “And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only?”

PRAYER.

Thou, O God, hast brought us thus far. We have by Thy goodness been carried up Transfiguration Heights, and permitted to see Jesus with Moses and Elijah ministering to Him. For the second time we have heard the voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Oh, sink this utterance deep in our souls. And when the Heavenly Glory has passed from sight, give us the feeling of having Jesus—Jesus only. Then we have what will suffice in every sorrow, in every joy, in all our bereavements and exaltations. Let each of us have Jesus only, and we are armed with God. Eternity is on our side. We are impregnable. AMEN.

Help us, O Lord, thy yoke to wear,
Delighting in thy perfect will;
Each other's burdens learn to bear,
And thus thy law of love fulfill.

A TELLING PRINCIPLE.

SERMON VII.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.—ACTS XX. 35.

So thought Paul. In some such words the Lord Jesus taught. But the world does not believe in the principle contained in this sentence. It reverses the words and says, “It is more blessed to receive than to give.” At least, every man, who is actuated by the worldly spirit, thinks of gain, profit, accumulation of property, as the end and aim of life. To tell such a person that to give is human, that to give rather than receive yields the greater profit, that to sacrifice self for the sake of humanity is to follow the noblest example the world has seen, would be to address him in an unknown tongue. He receives as first principles, as axiomatic truths, such proverbial sayings as these, “mind your business,” “make money honestly, if you can, but *make money*,” “honesty is the best policy,” as much as to say that something else may be good policy. Texts like these carry the greatest weight. Such maxims are by no means disregarded. They are common to all countries and languages. They express a general thought—thank God—not the universal idea. Accordingly men are

everywhere taking advantage of one another. The clever man, according to the popular notion, is he who makes the most money in the shortest space of time, and with the fewest scruples. No wonder such terms as *benevolence*, *sympathy*, *self-sacrifice* have lost their deep meaning. Are we astonished that men no longer listen with reverence to such words as, "Let us labor, working with our hands the thing which is good, that we may give to him that needeth," or, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves," or "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ," or "The words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive?"

The text implies that it is less blessed to receive than to give. We are not, therefore, to conclude it is not blessed to receive. Circumstances may indeed rob receiving of its blessedness. There may be a total want of appreciation on the part of the mere receiver. He may lack gratitude for the gifts bestowed and render railing and cursing for blessing and praise. In such circumstances a man cannot receive as a Christian. Again, the necessity that calls for help from others may be of our making. If brought to starvation and beggary through our own misconduct, or sloth, or envy and hatred, so long as these sins are not repented of, we cannot in a Christian spirit receive the kindly gifts, with which others may be ministering to the wants which we ourselves have created. Through hardness of heart the benefactions which are bestowed upon us do not stir our souls into love and esteem. How many on this

account, on whom the blessings of charity are poured, never exhibit humble gratitude, but rather turn upon their benefactors as though they were their worst enemies. Alas! it is so. But on the other hand there is a Christian receiving as well as giving. And when so placed that the good deeds of others are seen to be substantial mercies sent to us in the kind providence of God, we will show ourselves to be the children of God by thanking Him as the giver of every good and perfect gift, and by turning with fond gratitude to those who have been kindly instrumental in bringing to us such a portion of Heavenly blessing. This brings us to the topic of our discourse —*the comparative value of giving and receiving*. “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

I. We remark, in the first place, that to give implies maturity and power that are wanting in the mere receiver. The one occupies a higher place than the other. The one has fullness to compare with the other’s emptiness. He has accordingly in himself the happiness of possessing those things with which he freely parts.

Perhaps the most striking example of giving and receiving, which we can take from our human life, is that which is seen in the relation of parent and child. An infant brings nothing except a mother’s love with it into the world. On being ushered into life, how helpless and dependent! But the mother takes the child into her warm bosom, and feeds it from the perennial fountain of her love. She gives away her strength—her very life—to

another. Then think of all the fostering care which must be bestowed upon that babe long before it can utter a responsive word or move about the room. Imagine the weary labors, the anxieties, the fastings, sleeplessness, the yearning love of that father, who is honestly proud of the angel God has put in his hands,—all that he may earn bread and comfort for the little one. Having provided for the body then there come harassing cares and strenuous persevering efforts to cultivate the mind and direct the heart of the child. Here is a work to strain the strength of these loving parents. How it often furrows the brow and whitens the hair of such toiling ones! Follow these parents as their children are growing from infancy and leaving boy and girlhood behind, and witness their sacrifices to get them an honorable place in the world. Well, while praising such self-denying efforts, is it not true that these parents are thus showing they occupy a higher platform in the scale of life than their children? They have what their dear ones want. Into the exquisite enjoyments they have in giving their children cannot enter. Alas! alas! has it not cost many painful thoughts to look back upon the cares and anxieties of our parents when shielding and protecting our childhood, and upon our want of gratitude as we received the very best they had to give. And yet there is some comfort in thinking their very power to give argued enjoyments and possessions that were then above our experience. Children receiving cannot rejoice as parents who give. The smile that dimples the rosy cheek only points to the fountain of joy

in the father's heart. The food which nourished the babe, the clothing which gave warmth and protection—these are but symbols of the love glowing in the mother's heart. The simple lessons portraying the love of God, the self-sacrificing spirit of Christ, and setting forth the duties of their little ones towards God and man, were but finger-posts pointing to the deep-piety, reverence, the spirit of filial obedience to God, existing in the hearts of father and mother. What through their instrumentality was but germinating in the tender souls of their offspring, had already been developed in their own hearts and lives. No, the child can never be as the parent until he comes to the same responsibility. The child cannot be as the man. And so it is seen that the man or woman enjoying the matured power which ministers to the weakness and wants of the child is an illustration of the words of our Lord, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

To illustrate further the thought now before us, let us look to the philanthropist. He is eminently the giver,—the poor, the wretched, the ignorant, the orphan and widow—as the case may be—are the receivers. It is not imagination speaking when we picture in brilliant colors the lives of the loving-hearted. History is full of them. We believe that every age has given birth to men and women devoting themselves and their means to benefit their fellow-men. Our own age is not wanting in many illustrious examples. Ragged schools, orphanages, hospitals, as well as countless private benefactions, are evidence of this. Wherever there has been distress, or

want, or suffering of a special kind, there is some one raised to meet the case and with kindly heart and skillful hands relieve it. The cruelties practiced upon slaves, and the degradation in which they were involved stirred the soul Wilberforce and led him to devote his life to the cause of emancipation. The barbarous and savage treatment meted out to inmates of prisons, to convicts of the galleys, to victims of insanity, gave work to Howard, the philanthropist. The orphan and—worse than that—the child of the beggarly drunkard or convicted criminal, have given rise to noble institutions by which Muller and Guthrie will ever be remembered. The name of Peabody, who devoted millions to the cause of education, to build homes, to found museums and churches is a household one. There are besides hosts of givers, whose works are not heralded, shaded in obscurity, yet going through toil and sacrifice to help their fellow—creatures. While all these are seemingly throwing themselves away, how truly the words apply to each one, “It is more blessed to give than to receive!” The wonderful means required to accomplish such benevolent purposes, for the most part accumulated through their own industry and talents;—above all, the heart, the love *they* have to give, argue fullness and power—placing them on a platform far above not only the recipients of their kindness but even the generality of fellow—men. A man who lives amid squalid filth and beggary and disease, and does nothing to lift his fellows from deep degradation shows he is no better nor higher than they; but he who labors and sacrifices to lift them out of the mire

not only enjoys light, air and cleanly rooms himself, but has a mind to appreciate the very blessings he gives. He who can dwell amid ignorance and prejudice, and never feel any stirrings of soul to aid in the education of his fellow-men, must be ignorant and brutish himself. But he who gives money and influence to educate and civilize men must have a mind to appreciate truth and goodness. The person who is well contented to live amongst Godless, Christless people without the desire to win their souls must be Godless and Christless too. But he, who goes forth carrying precious seed, must have it growing in his own heart. In his soul the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ must be life and peace and joy. The fountain not flowing must be exhausted and empty—the tree not yielding must in itself be barren. But what fullness in the fountain that is ever flowing, what health and maturity in the tree whose branches are bending with fruit! And so what maturity and power in him who is giving for the good of mankind! Compared with the weakness and ignorance and degradation that call forth his efforts, how much better is he! As the stream is but a miniature form of the lake from which it flows, as the fruit is small and imperfect, compared with its yielding trees, as the ray is but the infinitesimal fragment of the Sun's light, so the receiver at the hands of the benevolent is weak and helpless compared with him from whose fullness he has received. Does not the life of every one who has a heart to give and love exemplify the meaning of the Saviour's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive?"

II. But let us advance to another thought, and observe, in the second place, that receiving is after all only a preparation for giving. "Freely ye have received, therefore freely give," is the great law of life. It is the more blessed, then, to give as the grand end and aim of all receiving. This is seen to be a law of nature. The tree gets from the earth those nourishing substances which are by and by changed by the mysterious chemistry of light and heat into precious fruits. It is ready to pour these into the husbandman's lap in the season of maturity. The landscape receives the bright light of the sun, and its rivers and trees and mountains give it back in rich and dazzling colors. Rivers and lakes are supplied with waters pouring from the dark clouds of the heavens, and then give them forth by gushing fountain, or roaring cataract or by the calmer flow of the level plain, to replenish and refresh the mighty deep. So it is with man. His childhood and youth are periods of receiving and are preparatory to the time of activity and labor. He has received health and strength—his mind has been supplied with stores of knowledge—his heart has been exercised with faith and love, and now in entering upon manhood it is to expend what he has obtained upon others. It is to devote himself to the advancement of truth, to the service of God. When he does this he is a faithful servant. But when we see a young man upon whom so much care and love has been expended, devoting himself to idleness and sinful pleasure, why, what is this but an abortion of life? He is not answering the true

end of life. He has turned the blessedness of receiving into degradation of his being and does not occupy the higher platform of giving for which his gift of life, his health, his training were all a preparation. And so too, when any one receives help in the time of distress, when he feels the value of a friend who gives him a timely helping hand, when in sickness he is visited by those who are ready to aid and comfort him, if he is permanently relieved through these means being blessed of God, O ! will he not go forth to comfort the afflicted, to relieve the poor, or wait upon the sick and dying with all needful help and prayers ? Yes, brethren, that is the Christian's law of life,—to give and to give freely, because he has received and received freely. He will impart help because he has received help ; he will forgive, for he has forgiven ; he will love, because he has been loved ; he will minister in return for the ministrations which were rendered him. It is more blessed then to give, because to receive and never to give has not the promise of blessing at all, and it is less blessed to receive than to give, for we have not yet reached the grand purpose of our life—to devote ourselves heart and soul to the good of others.

III.—In the third place, we observe that to give is Divine. God ever gives and never receives. In His work of creation He is seen to be the Giver. He is the grand source—the everlasting fountain. To the heavens above He has given the starry host. To these countless orbs suspended in space He has given the light with which they

shine. To our solar or planetary system He has rendered symmetry and order, its wondrous motions and its glorious beauty. Upon our earth He hath lavished His wondrous benefactions. The land and water, the air and light, He has made secret reservoirs of nourishing substances from which flowers and herbs and trees derive beauty and productiveness. His limitless power of design He has displayed in the almost infinite variety of vegetable and animal forms. To the stream He has given its soft murmuring music—to the avalanche and cataract their sonorous roar—to the birds their variegated plumage and gift of song, and to browsing animals quiet waters and pastures green—to beasts of prey their rapid motion, their unflinching boldness, their keenly sensitive organs. All these He has placed under the dominion of man. This world, with its supplies of food and clothing, with its laws of cohesion and gravitation, with its steam and electricity, with its light and heat, is His vast inexhaustible donation to man. And has He not bestowed upon man his beautiful and agile form, his strength of limb and muscle, his senses to enable him to derive pleasure or warning from the world of matter, his gift of song, his articulate language, above all is not the soul of man God's special creation? It was in the likeness of God man was made. From whence has the mind its power of thought, of reasoning, of imagination, of memory, of affection? And can God receive from the starry firmament, from our system of sun and planets, from this earth, from its oceans and continents, from its mountains and valleys, from its trees and animals and more

than all from man, in the sense in which He has given? No, these and man included can only give what they received and nothing more. God gives what He has never received. It is the Divine prerogative then to give. It is the grandeur of God's nature to give. And we, brethren, in serving our day and generation, in giving our health, our strength, our very life to our children, to society at large, are in the only conceivable way approaching the character of Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift.

That to give is Divine is exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ. The Apostle in our text says, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." We do not find these very words recorded by any of the Evangelists. He often gave expression to similar language. But, brethren, action speaks more forcibly than words—a life is better than a book, better than a thousand sermons. And it was Christ's life that said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." When did the Saviour ever receive? Yes, the Angels ministered unto Him. His mother gave Him her heart, her fondest love, her tender solicitude. A forgiven sister washed his feet with sacred tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, that which is a woman's pride and glory. A convicted publican took Him to his house. Lazarus and his two sisters sheltered Him under their friendly roof. A few women stood by His Cross. That is about all which can be said concerning Christ receiving. It was blessed without doubt for Him to receive such ministrations.

But O, these never gave, never could give as they received from Him. Did not his mother drink from the ever flowing fountain of His wisdom and love, did not the poor sinning woman receive forgiveness and a new heart, did not the disciples enjoy His friendship. His protection, His teaching? Was not Zaccheus made a new man by his contact with the Saviour? Did not the sisters receive Lazarus their lost brother back from the dead, were not the faithful women at the cross rewarded with the last touching expression of His heavenly countenance, did not John get the most tender charge, when Jesus said from the Cross, "Behold thy mother," and Mary receive a son in lieu of the well beloved one now in agony? Yes, Christ gave more than He ever received. And what shall we say of the gift of Himself to the world from which He received nothing but cursing and railing? He gave the world a life—grand in its simplicity, beautiful in its devotion to mankind, lovely in its spiritual qualities. He gave a life inexhaustible in its meaning, a life more suggestive and sacred than the most original poem. It was a life of constant giving. It was a center from which emanated rays of virtue. Wherever He went His footsteps left their mark. And there is a vitality in that life which has not expended itself during these nineteen centuries. It is reproducing itself every day. It is, if possible, a more interesting study and profounder problem to-day than it was to those from whose sight he was taken up into the heavens. To that life the world owes all its good, its emancipation from spiritual bondage, its knowledge of God,

its benevolent institutions, its works and deeds of charity. Did Christ give more than this to the world? Could He give more? Yes, He gave himself a ransom for sin. In place of His holy life He substituted a righteous death. He completed the work of man's deliverance by dying a death and thus shedding precious blood which involved pardon to the sinner, restoration to God's favor, the enjoyment of peace and endless felicity in the kingdom of heaven. The continual utterance of Christ's life was, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." If these words were not, as they well might have been, written on the Cross, they were written in His every pain and groan, they were written in His dying agonies, they were written in His last utterances. O who can rightly appreciate that memorable moment in Christ's dying struggle when He said, "It is finished," without reading it in the light of the principle of our text, ' It is more blessed to give than to receive?"

If this be so, that Christ's giving himself is our example—seeing I feel sure the words are true, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—need you wonder that the Church as a whole is earnest and solicitous about its missionary work and that you are called to give what you can afford for the cause? Some have the notion, if they support the particular church with which they may be connected, they are doing all that is required of them. On the contrary your congregational expenses are in the relation to benevolence and missionary enterprise, what the expenses of a store from rent, heating, lighting, service, are to the

expenditure required for the manufacture of the goods, their delivery throughout the country and world, and the enlargement of the business. In other words one does not keep open store merely to pay necessary expenses, but to make money to be spent on improvement and increase, and upon personal and family purposes and to lay up some capital besides. This Church is, so to speak, our store, it is a spiritual mart, and is not instituted barely to carry on itself and then fold its arms and say, "how well we have done." If it is not sending out its goods, its gospel of salvation to bless a multitude with forgiveness, and impelling forces to lead in new directions, and to reduplicate itself by building churches, disseminating the Bible, planting schools and colleges and hospitals, creating in fact new colonies of Christians, it is not good for anything and its worship without being a workshop becomes a farce. I love to think of our Home and Foreign mission work as like unto the Railway system, beginning with a few miles of road, and spreading and spreading till it covered Great Britain and Ireland, and leaping across the straits to Europe, and then to America, Australia, Africa even—to all the Continents and Islands of the seas—and not only so but carrying its millions of passengers and enriching every land and city with the products of the earth. This is what has been seen with the Church. It began in Jerusalem, but behold ! how it has increased and spread till now it has churches and missionaries and schools planted throughout the world. We question whether any congregation shutting itself tight

against the call to spread the Gospel throughout the world ever reaches the point of paying its expenses. Here is our commission from the Saviour, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Jesus virtually says, if you want to make your congregational expenses appear a mere trifle, go heartily into my work. Send forth your missionaries—your church travellers—your Bibles, your books. Build for me a Sanctuary in every needful place. Multiply agencies. Be full of ingenuity for the spread of my good news. We do not distinguish between Home and Foreign missions, except as regards languages, and the special means adapted to the circumstances. They are one work. But they should go on in due proportion. I can easily see what to give to each by studying the work of the Church as a whole to which I belong. Our church is aiming—say, at a million for each of these—not to speak of the requirements of education, ministerial relief, Sabbath school work, church and manse erection, the evangelisation of our colored people and other forms of christian work. Let me endeavor to give even above the measure or standard—and lo, what an increase to the missionary revenue of the church! But strange to say, I find myself no loser. My own resources grow in endeavoring to lay out for my Lord. He blesses me. He increases my basket and store. Let us give out our gospel freely, let us send ministers with unstinted hand, let us bestow unsparingly upon the needs of others at home and abroad, and, explain it as you will, you are none the poorer, but are enriched with growing means for more and more enterprise,

while your heart is made happy in view not only of accomplished results but of taking your part in the work which honors the Lord and Master and in laying foundations for still greater enterprise. Let us give as the widow gave her mites, and we will lay ourselves and all that we have at the feet of Jesus.

PRAYER.

O God, alone art Thou Creator. Thou art distinguished from angels, from men, in this that no other can create a single particle of dust, or one ray of light. Whilst making man on the earth partner with Thyself, he cannot make out of nothing a drop of water or grain of gold. Yet Thou dost give thy child the imitative faculty, so as to ally himself with God and invent and produce instruments, engines, vast structures, factories to make every conceivable article for common use, books to discover Thy profound secrets. Thou art the only One who in the creative sense of the words canst say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Thus too, O Lord, is it with the Gospel of Salvation. Thou art the Author. All that we can do is to make it known. But oh ! how honored and blessed are we in being permitted to sow the precious seed which our Saviour has given. Let us be earnest in telling others the words of the Lord Jesus, "Freely ye have received, freely give." AMEN.

Blest be the tie that blinds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

TOO MANY CHURCHES.

SERMON VIII.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.—PSALM cxxxiii. 1.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one.—JOHN xvii: 20-21.

Why there should be so many denominations is a puzzle. The essence of Christianity is love, but its forces are divided. Even those who call themselves by the same name are split into separate organizations. It would be hard to say how many Presbyterian sects there are in the world. In Scotland alone besides many smaller bodies of the one name, there are the three great churches, Established, Free and United Presbyterian. On my word from our point of view in America the difference between one and another is so infinitesimal as to require a large magnifying microscope to see it. These three have the same confession, catechism, polity, psalms and tunes, and prayers and sermons are on one plan. You could not say you were worshipping in the Free or United Presbyterian church as against the Established from anything occurring. We would defy you to say the service was Free Church because of the form, or the doctrine, or the preaching.

There they are with the one round of singing, prayer and sermon, and yet in many parts of the country the ministers are scarcely on speaking terms, and the din and strife amongst the people once so prevalent have hardly passed away. We understand why Episcopalianism may keep aloof from Presbyterianism, but why so many organizations having one name and in the same country should do so from one another, it is difficult to explain. Those informed know that the first is the State Church, having endowments, Churches and Manses outside of voluntary effort; that the Free represents the struggle which was carried on for years on questions of State interference and patronage; and that the United Presbyterian is apart from the others as accepting only the voluntary principle of support. Why so many Presbyterian bodies should be found in Canada, in the United States, and all over the world, is a problem indeed. The churches in Canada were from the start free of State interference, and yet in spite of several unions there are still Church of Scotland and others as against the great Presbyterian Church, which has covered the land, is most progressive, whose missionary enterprises at home and abroad are wonderful. But look to our own Country at this moment, and besides a variety as pertaining to every denomination, what a number of sects we have! In addition to a few smaller ones, and not including Roman Catholics, there are these large bodies—Episcopalian, Congregational, Baptist, Reformed, Methodist, Presbyterian. Why is this? We have this condition from the fact of immigrants coming from the countries where these

Churches are found and bringing each their form of polity and worship. To the Scotch and Irish we owe Presbyterianism, to England Episcopalianism and largely the Congregational and Baptist and Methodist bodies, to Holland the Reformed Church. Excepting in external form they are almost identical as to government, doctrine, and practice. But there they are stubbornly rooted side by side on our soil. We are to ask, applying what is to be said to our own land, why should there be such a state of things? Is it healthy to have it so? If Christ's prayer were answered in full, would this continue? With all these orders of Churches, do we begin to know the meaning of the words, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity?

I. In the first place, supposing we are right as to the true meaning of these words and say that the grandest spectacle on earth would be a United Christendom, let us ask where this would land us? .

When Christ prayed that the disciples might all be one, He either meant them to continue as a single organization, or if ever divided to exhibit brotherly love, and thus lead spectators to exclaim, "Behold! these brethren, how they loved one another." We can hardly think the Saviour had other before His mind than for one loving, united people to be His. It does look, not only at first and second sight too, to be at the least unfortunate to have Christendom broken into fragments. We have witnessed the benefits arising from the union of various branches of one and the same denomination. We remember Methodism in

Canada was divided into four bodies. It was felt by all that these should be one. The only obstacle to this was the fact that one was Episcopal in its polity. It was marvellous how quickly the difficulty was got over. They all agreed to change the name of bishop to superintendent—superintendents henceforth overseeing the work. These four became completely one in no time. Can any one doubt it was better for the cause? The spirit of union had been in the air for a long time previous. In 1875 the Church of Scotland and the already powerful Canadian Presbyterian Church had become one—there being no need to keep up in a Colony the microscopic differences that were separating the Churches in Scotland. Is not such a union far better adapted to the work of the Church than when we are broken up and carrying on unhealthy competition? What a grand movement was that which culminated in the new and old schools of the Presbyterian Church becoming one! There was no difference really between them and their marriage was a happy one, as seen in the spread of Presbyterians throughout the United States and the work done in Missions. Who can doubt that the day is surely coming when the Presbyterian bodies north and south, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Reformed and United Presbyterians will unite into one vast body? They are practically one in doctrine, polity and the spirit in which they do the work, and what in the name of common sense keeps them apart? The devil must have some hand in it. But we have now to turn to the union of Episcopilians and the other religious bodies. Is there any thing

too hard in this? At first sight the former looks far removed from the others—with its surplices and rubric and altar and the emphasis put upon the word priest. The High Church with its confessional and insistence upon so much rite and ceremony—turning to the East and all the rest—would present to union an insurmountable difficulty in our opinion. But boil all these things down, and we see there is only one point of difference between *Episcopals* and the rest. That is the matter of *Bishops*. While rejoicing in liberty to pray as we choose, we would not object to prayers being in part read by the minister. The thirty-nine articles are the same in doctrine with our confession. Christ and Him crucified is the recognized theme in both branches. There is no longer a difference as to the use of instruments, and look the matter straight in the face, the only point between us is that of *Bishops*. If this could be solved by these bishops becoming superintendents, there would be nothing to prevent union to-morrow. The difference between the *Baptists* and the rest looks to be serious. The one holds to immersion of adults at baptism, and in this country to inadmissibility to membership without immersion. The rest baptize infants, and are not thus exclusive as to admission of members. Is this a lasting barrier to union between *Baptists* and the rest? We think not. When enjoying a holiday in London in 1889, Mr. Spurgeon in person invited us to his *Communion* and to take part in the preparatory service without raising question about our immersion. In this country, however, close communion

does present a difficulty. But why the Baptists should insist upon this here, and in England they should not, is beyond our comprehension, unless it is that the English Baptists were close when their representatives came to our shores, and that, while the former have advanced, the latter have kept where they were. There is only the matter of immersion of adults to deal with. Whether that could be got over we cannot say. This we know that certain Baptist clergymen go through a form of blessing little children when dying as a comfort to parents. There could be no hindrance to union if the immersionists were left alone to do as they like, and would permit the rest to baptize children according to custom. As to Congregationalists, Reformed, Methodists, Presbyterians, there are but mere shadows between them. Go in blindfold to worship with these in succession and you could not tell the one from the other. The day for their union cannot be long postponed in presence of the manifest growth towards each other in polity, and the frequency with which pastors are called from one to another. In concluding the point before us we say, God speed the cause of union. May we have as much of it as possible. "Let brotherly love continue." May all differences be looked at in their true light. We pray these may disappear, and we feel the millennium shall have set in, when all our denominations will see eye to eye, and become one vast Church to represent Christ on earth, and that in their union we shall have a glorious exemplification of the words, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

II. We have to consider, in the second place, the disastrous tendency of the sectarian spirit. Whatever may be said about denominations which differ in polity building and carrying on work with others in the same place, we feel it to be a mistake unduly to multiply congregations of the same name. We know a large number of towns in which too many Churches have been built, but let me refer to one prominent example with which we are all familiar. In the place referred to there are four Methodist Churches, which could be made two. There are two or three Presbyterian Churches doing work that one could perform. There are several Baptist organizations where one would suffice. Supposing Baptists and Presbyterians would join, and Episcopalians and Methodists do the same, and the Congregational and Reformed Churches follow suit, all the better for Christianity.

But at all events why not the Christians of the same denomination become one? What would be the immediate effects? There would be a large and powerful congregation, worthy of the place. There could be a pastor and evangelist set over the same Church—one to do preaching and the other parochial work. The running expenses would be so reduced as to set free large sums for the proper equipment of the individual Church and to carry on missionary enterprise at home and abroad. There would not be a continual depression upon the heart of the pastor at losses of well-to-do parishioners through no fault of his, but because of removals elsewhere and deaths, and at the non-protestant character of the incoming people, for there

would always be sufficient to make one good Church. Remember we are speaking of down-town Churches. It would no longer be said, "How the cause of Christ is going down." For instead of homoeopathic doses of religion in a variety of buildings and localities we would have concentration, gathering around a point, the union of forces otherwise scattered. To what would this lead? Well, properties rendered useless could be turned into endowments. The money saved from supporting buildings not required, from having too many pastors, from overflow of agencies, would be enormous, and could be spent in proper salaries, in reading rooms, in missionary work.

For our part we have to rejoice in the splendid work done by Sunday Schools, Christian Endeavorers, Epworth League, Women's Temperance and Missionary Societies. We have to think of all these as being in answer to Messiah's prayer—"that they all may be one." The International Series of lessons has accomplished much in the line of union. We now see the teachers of a town or section of a city gathered together weekly for the study of the passage to be taught the following Sunday. Look at Sabbath School Conventions in our day, what a marvellous outgrowth of brotherly love! Missionary enterprise has brought the women of our Churches wonderfully together. The results are beyond calculation. But our point is, what a lovely sight woman when thus consecrated! Is she not in her corporate capacity the mother of orphans, of the poor, of the suffering, of the ignorant? She has a perfect genius for benevolence. She

is at her best when stooping to be merciful. We owe to her a living exemplification of our words, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Compared with miserable gossip to which idle mouths are accustomed, contrasted with mere talk about dress to which thoughtless ones are prone, put side by side with pleasure after which so many are flying with unquenchable thirst, think of the noble occupation, of the high purpose, of the good example of our sisters when giving themselves to the work of extending the Lord's Kingdom in any form. How much again do owe to the Christian Endeavor movement? That thought of Dr. Clarke passed like a lightning flash around the world, and now what a result! If carried out consistently it must revolutionize the world, for it is securing the young for Christ; it is joining them in one for the study of Scripture; it is engaging them in works of mercy in behalf of the poor, the ignorant, the dying; it is firing their hearts with the missionary spirit. What may be the outcome of this in twenty years? It is our prayer to revolutionize the world in that time. The Christian Endeavor movement was the one thing of which we could think as purely unsectarian—uniting us all in one. And so we are not sure about the wisdom of establishing the Epworth League. That is to separate one branch of the Church from the rest. It puts a hedge around the Methodists. It excludes, and that is not the thing we are after in these days. It may be all right, but we do not think it is. And we can only imagine a real benefit coming from it in the future

when such will be the spirit on the part of all Churches toward union as to lead to the Christian Endeavor and Epworth League becoming one—as they really are so now. There is no essential difference in the thing recently set up. Why should it be is the question troubling us in the presence of Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one?"

We do not want to see the Church becoming political. There would be only evil in that. It would lead to parties, contests over Candidates, divisions. But we believe in Christian union—if not in the corporate capacity, yet in accordance with the Gospel that Christians should love one another. Because then we shall have strength from union successfully to fight our foes. There are the two questions before us—How to preserve the Christian Sabbath, and how to repress the rum traffic in general but especially as this encroaches upon our Rest Day. The people in their mad folly after pleasure on the Lord's Day do not see it now, but they will be made to feel it by and by, that there is no greater insanity than that of throwing away the one day upon mere indulgence, for it comes to that—this awful violation of God's command, "Remember the Sabbath day," and what a curse upon our land not only the saloon every day, but open on the Lord's day, and running a business that wastes the wages of the working man and brings misery and famine into many a home. It is in union that we will see what we are to do in the premises. It is from genuine sympathy we shall ever be able to deal with the open saloon on the Sabbath. And so

with other great public questions affecting our welfare. Let us be one in the work. Let our Churches be united in the bonds of holy love, and with the common prayer for wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may yet see the day when the cause of Christ shall triumph, and hold the reins, and secure the world's good in every possible aspect.

NOTE—This sermon on “Too Many Churches” it will be seen is addressed “To Many Churches.”

FEAR NOT"

BY MAGGIE J. MITCHELL. 1886.

Through all the changing scenes of life,
There is one happy thought,
That He, who answers every prayer,
Says to us all, "fear not."

Whene'er in sorrow, toil, or pain,
We should not be distressed,
For, He who rules in Heaven above,
Is our eternal rest.

If e'er temptations come to thee,
"Fear not," for He is nigh;
And waits to hear and answer prayer,
Addressed to Him on high.

"Fear not," when death comes to thy door,
'Tis God who says be bold,
For thou hast done thy work on earth,
I take thee to my fold.

And, oh ! how happy it will be,
When all His lambs go home,
And sing His everlasting praise
Beneath Heaven's vaulted dome.

THE VALUE OF TEARS.

SERMON IX.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.—ACTS XX. 37.

Is it manly to shed tears? Is it becoming one priding himself on a courageous and daring spirit? Would you encourage weeping in your boy? Somehow we have grown to think that crying is a womanish business. We are not surprised at the rain as it pours from a girl's eyes. While we would not encourage tears at the slightest cause, is it disparaging to a woman to say she is easily made weep? If she is readily moved in this way, what does it show? Let it be said that here we have a prime difference between the sexes, can you truly say that our sisters are on that account inferior to men? Would it not prove a difference of nature? Yes, we think the woman is superior in her very tenderness, that she is angelic because of the sweetness of her disposition. And after all I feel not sure but that a man is most manly when like his mother or wife or sister the dew drops on occasion stand glistening in his eyes.

This depends. It depends on the man himself—of what sort of stuff he is made. On first consideration

you would not look for a man like Paul actually weeping almost in any circumstances. Well, why do we think this of Paul? It is because we imagine him to be a person of a different temperament. The more we read of his writings and sayings we fancy before us one of strong reasoning faculties rather than of a susceptible nature. Follow him in his course, there is *he* of mighty mind always before you. There are scenes in which Paul comes out just as we would expect. He can denounce in no measured terms when some wicked fox or mean liar is before him. "His spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city (of Athens) wholly given to idolatry." In the midst of the storm, which swept over the island of Mylete, he remains calm. He foretells what will certainly befall the men, if persisting in leaving the boat. Paul seems strikingly at home standing at the bar before Felix and Agrippa. He knows not fear nor what it means. He looks more like the judge than anything else as he reasons of temperance and righteousness and judgement to come. What a noble attitude we find him in when writing Timothy from his prison cell in Rome. He does not utter mere sentiment. He does not appeal to the pity of anyone. He is like a rock in mid-ocean—stern, rugged, unimpressive, when the tempest is urging the waves in fury upon him. One would almost think he courts imprisonment. He fears not death certainly, though it has to come in the worst form. It is not merely the consciousness of being innocent, but there is the brave spirit within his

breast. It shudders not at the executioner's boast of being commissioned to take his life. And then let me turn to the imperishable writings which this man has left behind him. They are the strong utterances of a man dead in earnest. Such a one cannot weep as a rule. There are oftener seen on such the smile of the hero, the daring of the warrior, the intense gaze of one who has set his heart on victory. Such and more was Paul and we are surprised, therefore, to find him classed with those who wept. Methinks it makes these drops precious indeed falling from such a face.

But we do not wonder at the scene here described when we look into the words immediately preceding.

That giants can weep is evident when we read that, "Joseph fell upon his father's neck and wept on his neck a good while." Gen. 46.29. How impressive is the parting scene between Jonathan and David! Forced to separate for the time they warmly embrace, and there seems to be contention as to which will shed tears the most until it is said that David exceeded. There you have two mighty men in agony at the thought of leaving each other. There are no two words forming a more deep and suggestive sentence than these, "Jesus wept." They occur in the narrative of Christ raising Lazarus. Why weep is a question forced upon us as we read, for there appeared rather to be every reason to rejoice. Would not the thought of conquering the grave and death, and restoring a beloved brother to his sister's fond arms, rather give rise to triumphant expectation

than to deepest grief? Oh! if our thoughts run in this line, how little do we know the tender, sensitive heart of the Saviour! For did He not weep because of the spectacle before him of the unbelieving multitude? It was because of the reign of iniquity in human hearts that he was indeed “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” We witness this feeling welling from his breast when He cries, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?” It is the wicked opposition of men to what will do them the most good, that opens the fountain of the Saviour’s heart. No wonder his was a life of grief. There might be indignation at times, aye and wrath, such as is becoming the divine nature in view of law and right trampled under foot by wicked men. But on the whole, sorrow pressed him down, for there was ever present to his mind the view of what the world might have been had not men dared to oppose their God and of what the world had become through dire opposition to the truth. There was the moral waste. There was the blight upon earth’s fair fields. The multitude were lying in wretched despair because of guilt and sin. Satan rather than God seemed supreme, if one would judge from the abject subserviency to his will shown by the vast majority of men. And if the same spirit that was in Christ be in us, we too will be in a sweat of anguish at sight of our fair earth under the ban of Satan,

and of the crimes and degradation everywhere prevalent. Need we wonder that Martin Luther was moved to compassion at sight of the ecclesiastical thraldom in which the people were held? Should we be astonished to be told that John Knox, while indignant at the oppression by queen and priests, was melted into tenderest grief in view of the condition of the people; or that the tender heart of Hamilton, as he stood firm amid the fires of martyrdom, was deeply affected with the spectacle of his country's slavery; or that Wilberforce, while spurred to greatest activity at the thought of the forlorn slave, felt the tenderest sympathy on his behalf? Are we surprised when we behold the suffering experienced by Howard in presence of prisoners in agonizing tortures and condemned to dark and filthy cells; or to behold Abraham Lincoln through his bleeding heart realizing the duty of the hour—to give freedom to the slave; or to witness the brave Kossuth roused to energy and enterprise because of his sympathy with the oppressed? It brings the Christ to a level with ourselves that we find him bathed in sorrow, and it lifts us somewhat to his standard that like him, realizing the sin and misery which everywhere abound, our hearts are stricken with keenest pain. You cannot help feeling that the brethren of Miletus "wept sore," because they were parting from a brother so well beloved as Paul. Just bring to mind the scene. It was not in some consecrated building the apostle uttered the beautiful discourse here recorded. But it was by the seashore where he was about to step on

board the crude vessel waiting to carry him to his own country. For our Lord and these earnest disciples were ready to preach at any moment and in every place. They did not linger ere pouring out their loving message until they would be arrayed in priestly garb and be surrounded with the insignia of office. They were on fire—anxious to draw their net and catch men. From the discourse reported in this chapter, which is evidently but a bare outline of what was said, one can readily imagine the impressive speaker Paul was, though he himself exclaims that men counted his bodily presence weak and his speech contemptible. But we suppose he thus speaks of himself as truly great men are apt to disparage their own talents and exertions. But here is a powerful presentation of the Gospel concluding with the eternal principle, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Think of Paul, as he spoke, "weeping" as he says of himself on another occasion. It is not the sermon of a preacher addressing the unconverted and seeking to arouse in men the great question, "What must I do to be saved?" But it is the instruction needed by the elders of the already formed Church at Miletus. It is a most valuable message to the Church in all ages. With what earnestness does he declare himself free of the blood of every man! With what intensity does he enjoin them "to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood!" To what an eloquent height does he rise, when knowing they are not to see one another's face again, he commends them "to God and to

the word of his grace!" Try to think of Paul, while speaking, with what fatherly tenderness he addressed them! All the love that was in him shone from his countenance. The rugged features were lit with a heavenly radiance. And these men felt they were parting with their father in Christ. The thought rushes upon them, "they will never see his face again." He is going forth to unknown trials and dangers. They felt sure of his martyrdom, for a man with such fervid words at a time like that could not be tolerated. No wonder they fell on his neck and kissed him. The scene was worthy of men of faith like these. It was indeed honor done to a man of noble bearing like Paul. The departure of the Apostle from them could never be forgotten. It was indelibly written on their hearts that, next to God himself, they were indebted to their friend now leaving them for the last time, for their high standing in the household of faith, and the bright prospects beyond this life that were before them. As the ship sailed away behold these men standing on the shore waving a fond farewell ere they set their feet to accomplish their return journey. And think of Paul returning their salute in token of the blessing he was leaving for them ! It is indeed a touching scene.

Such a spectacle can hardly be witnessed in our times. For the continents are bridged by mighty steamships, and the nations are brought together by means of railroads, telegraphs, and superior postal service. Yet were you bidding good bye to your son or daughter called to service in a foreign country, and leaving you it may be for

a long term of years, you could hardly help taking account of death—either your own or your child's coming between you and the realization of your hope of meeting again. We can not think of one being so placed without being intensely moved. What must it be to bid good bye to your son obeying the mandate of his country to go forth to war in defence of her liberty? One can sympathize with the well of grief opened up at sight of the missionary leaving father and mother, sisters, brothers and friends to carry the message of salvation to the savages of Africa or the islands of the Pacific. Yet such scenes have been often witnessed. For what a proud page is that of history which tells of the self-sacrificing devotion of the noble band who have planted the cross in heathen lands and laid deep and wide the foundations of Christian civilization. We are told of Dr. Geddes of Nova Scotia, who after twenty years of pastoral service in his own country, felt the call of God to go to the Pacific Islands so strongly that he had to tear himself from his beloved flock. These fell on his neck and kissed him as they were forced to let him go. What a proud thing they had to say of him after another twenty years that when he went to his island field there was not a single Christian and when he died there was not one savage! Imagine what it was for this very Dr. Paton, who has been electrifying Britain with his thrilling description of the cruel death of his beloved wife in these very islands, and of the superhuman deliverances from wreck and massacre which he experienced—try to conceive what it must have

been to leave his native city of Glasgow where he was honored and loved as a home missionary. Think of the great Dr. Duff leaving Scotland at a time when to go to a foreign country as a missionary seemed to be worse than a cruel death—think what it must have been to tear himself from beloved friends, and above all from his native Scotland, which would have taken pride in doing honor to her eloquent son. See him ship-wrecked on the way—his library, all but a Bible which was tossed to his feet by a friendly wave, swallowed up by the angry ocean—himself diverted from Africa to India in consequence. But he was spared to come back and thrill all Scotland with his fervid descriptions of heathen darkness and the need of gospel light. Just put yourselves in the place of David Livingstone, leaving his native Blantrye, discouraged from his task by parents and friends, bathed in tears as he bade them farewell. Think of his laborious career, of wasted physical life, dying in a jungle. But was it not worth all the agony of parting to have such a son of Scotland now a household name, and his body borne with reverent touch by his own converts to the shore of Africa to be carried to England and at the command of the noble Sovereign to be laid reverently away in Westminster Abbey? The story of Missions is one which takes thousands of volumes to narrate. But who knows the inward grief—the strong crying—the broken hearts—caused at the parting of these noble men and women from their beloved ones at home?

But you know, my dear friends, there are tears of joy as well as sorrow. It seems from the lofty tone of the narrative that the grief felt by Paul and his friends was caused at the thought of never again in this world seeing each other's face. But there was triumph in the gospel of Christ, that it would win its way by their or other human instrumentality. These elders might feel there was a cruel fate before their beloved friend. But they willingly gave him to his work, knowing that the salvation of multitudes was involved in such an outlay. And Paul's tears glistened with the light of triumphant joy as he gave them his blessing with which to return to their labor. It seems to me that were I called to give a child to the cause of God abroad, that the dew drops from my eyes would sparkle with joy in the very act of thus dedicating my child to God. We might part with the conviction of never seeing one another again, but would not my grief be assuaged by the thought of our meeting in Heaven and there learning in all its details the story of consecrated love? Yes, had one of you the prospect of losing your child for such a cause, I would counsel you to let your tears be those of joy. What honor would be done you! What a sacrifice to be sure, but think of the gain !!

Yes, let us remember that God will at last wipe all tears from our eyes in Heaven. There will be no more sorrow nor crying, when at length we come to die. No doubt there will be anguish in the thought of departing, or of the loss those who are left will sustain. But if the friend

we are losing be one with his heart set on Jesus and heaven, and if we ourselves are firmly built upon the Rock our sense of bereavement will soon become a blessed inheritance of expectation. God will put our tears in his bottle—to preserve them as a blessed memorial of fidelity to truth. And while there will be no such thing as sorrow in heaven it seems to me that our tears shed on earth on worthy objects will be a blessed memory throughout the ages.

The only awful thought which comes into one's mind in dealing with this subject is the tearless anguish of a lost soul. Conceive of one who cannot repent, or rather whose repentance can never signify penitence, whose hatred can never be turned into love, whose memory of deeds of darkness will become more intensified, what would not one give for sorrow to soften the hardened heart? Think of the cry of the rich man in hell when he said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." Oh no—I believe that the worst feature of that terrible fate, which awaits the wicked in another world, is that there is no place for tears.

“ God bless these hands united,
God bless these hearts made one;
Unsevered and unblighted
May they through life go on :
Here in earth’s home preparing
For mansions bright,
And there, for ever sharing
Its joy, where ‘ God is love ’ ”

M A R R I A G E .

SERMON X.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.—GEN. ii. 24.

Marriage is honorable in all.—HEB. xiii. 4.

Marriage is one thing in which men and women will never cease taking the deepest interest. It is next to the mountains and oceans and rivers in respect of antiquity. It takes us back to the very week following that of creation. We have in the formation of man from the dust of the ground and of woman from his side a well defined plan. In contemplating these two—the first in the order of our race—we behold the powerful and skillful hand of the Almighty. These are results of the touch of the Author of all. We can see the wisdom of the Divine mind in establishing a unity in man and woman. Man is before God, and woman taken from his side stands beside him. The Framer of their bodies, who breathed into them life and gave them mind and heart, exclaims, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” He thus performed the first marriage ceremony. What a value it puts upon marriage that it is commended again and again in

Scripture! Long after this union between our first parents had taken place, these were the words of King Lemuel as recorded in the last chapter of Proverbs, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." It was a reauthorization of marriage when our Saviour attended one at Cana of Galilee and honored it with his first miracle of turning water into wine. Need we wonder to find in Heb. xiii. 4. the words, "Marriage is honorable in all," showing how high it stood in the estimation of thoughtful men, and so it is to this day and will be to the end of the world's history. We can never grow tired of it. For,

I. In the first place, it is evidently that for which man and woman were created. There was a likeness between them at the start in point of both body and mind, yet such difference as not to make the one a reduplication of the other. Man had physical qualities that woman did not possess—so that merely glancing at the face you could tell the one from the other. On the other hand, woman was the helpmeet. She possessed something that man had not—discernible in form, in look, in voice. They could understand one another. Together they were able to enquire into the wonders around them. Their tasks lay alongside. Co-operation was the necessary result. They tilled the land in common. And yet there was dissimilarity between them—one finding in the other something not in him or her. There was more than companionship. These hearts joined in love, and there was no need of ceremony to join them together. Mere marriage form

could not do that. They were already one. Their hearts had flown together. And so it has been ever since. The only difference now is that there are not two beings only standing before us. They are brought mysteriously together out of the multitudes. There is the young lad now growing to maturity. Hitherto he has acted as though there were no difference between himself and the girls around. They have played together—perhaps quarrelled—without awaking other thought than of companionship. All at once he feels himself separate. He becomes conscious of needing some one to flow into his very being to constitute manliness in its highest form. It may seem strange there is always one ready to respond to these feelings, and long before word or thought of engagement has passed from mouth to mouth, there is an unconscious inclination of one to the other. They know not what it is, but a want grows within each heart. They are drawn together until they find themselves necessary to one another—until the man discovers what is wanting in himself to be in that other, and the woman feels herself drawn within the circle of another's personality. They are thrown together in the providence of God. We are not prepared to say that every marriage is ordained of God, so that one certain woman is laid out for every man. The number of uncongenial marriages—or mere legal unions—seems to argue against this. God of course knows beforehand every case of man and woman destined to be united. But in what we call the normal union, or the example of a man finding in a woman just

what he wants, and of a woman discovering in a man him to whom she feels specially fitted, there is surely design on the part of their Creator. So that we can say they are fitted for each other. The one may be born in England, the other in America. It is the same thing when they come together. There is the consciousness of tendency towards each other—of each filling a vacuum in the other. And spectators will notice how well suited they are long before a feeling of this kind takes root within their breasts. There comes the moment when love makes itself felt. They may have walked together, talked in each other's hearing, gone to church for years, without such feeling asserting itself. When they become thus conscious, then they know themselves to be for each other. There is the union formed. They have merged into one another's being. They are really one—long before marriage ceremony can be pronounced. They are more than companions, more than friends, they are part of each other. And when at length the question is put—a wholesome method enforced by Divine example—"What is to hinder?" "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh," they are thenceforth one in the eye of the law—one flesh before the world. Each has an individuality, but it is lost in their blending love. They have but one life to live, although each has a separate existence. The streams of their being, hitherto flowing apart yet being on the same level or plain, now merge together and become a mightier flow—a greater volume.

II. Notice, secondly, the end God has in view in thus creating man and woman for each other, and instituting their marriage. The Divine purpose of this is to create *the household*. In the case of Adam and Eve the home is constituted. It is obvious that this was done before sin entered into the world, or the appearance of the malicious tempter to evil. From which we are to conclude it to have been the design of the Almighty to build up the race into society and nations from the household centre. Had there been no sin, the original home would have been multiplied into thousands, and the kindred thus growing into national life and dimensions would have been the scene of endless felicity and prosperity. As with well ordered families to this day their blessedness is secured by keeping the Gospel covenant of Salvation, it would have proved with the multiplication of families into one grand nationality that they had the blessing of God upon them, and their growth was continually in the direction of health and strength. With the normally constructed household of to-day, it is the same thing. Husband and wife start out having in and upon them God's blessing. This means everything. The Divine favor may appear to many to be something impalpable, upon which we cannot lay our hands, that we cannot hear with our ears. But it is none the less real for all that. It is not the things we can see and touch that are the realities of life. These are for the most part ever fading and are destined to pass out of view. But those things which last are the riches and honors which our Maker imparts. With this

reality, with which to commence married life, the man and woman we are considering are wealthy beyond compare. It is evident God has in view their supreme happiness. With what joy in one another they begin their married life! Henceforth they are to live for each other. It may be that humble cot in the country, or the dwelling in the city, is but small. But what of that? It is home. The husband brings to it the earnings he acquires from the work of his hands. These are expended wisely and well to secure comfort. The wife lends skillful hands and industrious ways to the common weal, and behold the bright fireside, the well lighted room, the table spread with dainties—everything which skill and labor can command to secure comfort and peace. We generally find the well ordered couple growing in prosperity until the cottage or city dwelling becomes larger in size, and by and by through industry and good management they have no less than a palace to live in, and luxuries at their command. Such increase is not necessary to true happiness, but with these persons there is ever a growing delight in one another. Even though it be nothing but the cot still, you can see their lot is to lie on pastures green and by waters still, and to rejoice in their common welfare. The home is appointed by God for happiness. What a moment is that when the Unseen Hand places the little babe in the mother's bosom, and the father is more than ever attracted homewards by the magnet lying in that small crib! What a wonderful gift is a child! The home is indeed enlarged, though its rooms remain the same.

There is an incentive given to husband and wife they did not feel before. More than ever they give themselves to the task of building their household with the Creator's substantial mercies. As now they chant His praise, they are impressed with the duty before them, of caring for that tiny one, of shielding and protecting the child, and by and by of training their young with their enlarging powers in the way in which to go. In the narrative of the model wife in the last chapter of Proverbs, the happy home is beautifully pictured. There is not one child—there are many children, the objects of this excellent mother's care. She scrupulously attends to her family duties. She gives not sleep to her eyelids during the night of suffering and distress. She is diligent in bringing their food and clothing from afar. In her bosom lies her babe for protection and nourishment. With superior ability she conducts her merchandise. Her nimble fingers are never at rest. Withal there is room for the stranger at the gate. You will notice the honored place her husband has among the rulers of the land. He is known in the streets. As he passes along spectators instinctively say, "What a good wife that man has at home." If ever living epistle were known and read of all, it is the husband who comes daily from a well kept house. He is known by every look and gesture, by the step he firmly plants on the ground, by his entire bearing when at business. What a household that becomes, when at length the sons and daughters are attaining maturer years—when their education is going on—when father and mother are interesting themselves in their children's books and music

and usefulness, in their habits of skill and perseverance. If anything on earth is an approach to heaven, it is a well-regulated family. It lies in the joy which parents have in their children, and in the obedience and love which reign in their home.

Let us feel that "marriage is honorable in all,"—for it is by its means God builds up the state, the country, the race at large. There will never be nation to compare for health and prosperity with that in which the home occupies a distinguished place. What are we as a people but so many families related to one another by ties of kindred and fellowship? We make bold to say that it is where marriage is regarded as an holy estate the country is being lifted up to health and comfort. Should war ever come upon a land like this—war that arises from the ambition of tyranny and cruelty—the one thought of all patriots would be to defend their homes. The humble dwelling as well as the palace is sacred. There is not a man amongst us but would shed his last drop in defence of the home, nor a woman who would not follow her heroic husband or son to the battle field with her prayers for God to overshadow the household with His loving and protecting hands. Give us home in its true sense—with the meaning God lends to it—and we need not fear for national prowess. Yes! are we not patriots the moment our homes are attacked—when our wives and children are in danger?

III. You will observe, dear friends, thirdly, the meaning given to marriage when viewed as a symbol of the union between Christ and believers. The words of Paul (Rom.

xv:5.6) apply as a general principle to husband and wife more than to any other relationship. "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded to one another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." With these words before us we do not need go far till we come upon the thought of this Apostle, (1 Cor. vii. 25.-27.) "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it... that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Nay, such is Christian influence that even "the unbelieving husband becomes sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by her husband... else were their children unclean, but now are they holy." If so, then a loving husband and wife are a type of the marriage of Jesus Christ and all believers. Do we want to know the closeness with which Christ is knit to them? Behold the man and woman in their endearing nearness. Would you have the love of Christ pourtrayed in living colors, look upon that husband gazing with fond rapture upon her who is thus brought nigh? Do you want to see in what union between the Saviour and those who love him consists? Think of the self-sacrifice—the devotion—with which the husband waits upon the footsteps of his wife. Would you know the eternal duration of Christ's love, witness the man enduring to the end—faithful in every word and action—none the less reliable when absent, all the more precious when

present. Thus we can gaze into eternity as we behold the lovely sight of a husband maintaining his fidelity amid the abounding allurements. On the other hand, how learn the ardour with which believers look to Christ their husband, then see the deep attachment the wife reveals—behold her footsteps in the husband's interests. Would you know what it is to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ, then look on the unwavering faithfulness of that noble wife. If we would see how a believer is to wait on his Lord, regard the mother thinking not of self but carefully tending her husband and children. If you desire more than a picture of the zeal you should show in Christ's cause, turn with me to this living letter presented in that companion dear and true waiting upon her husband on a sick-bed—knowing not day from night—only caring to watch the face of her beloved. Yes ! think of this, you the husband and you the wife, exhibiting an imperishable bond which you are hardly conscious of but is none the less real, are teaching those around you what that mystical union between Christ and his followers means. As exemplifiers of “the love which suffereth long, and is kind, which envieth not . . . which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things,” you are but a dim reflection of the light and glory radiating from the tie which binds in one all believing persons to the Lord. It is my privilege, it is yours—dear husband and wife—to look with honest pride on Him who is our staff and stay—our rock and fortress.

While true that marriage is to be commended, we cannot help touching, in conclusion, the awful problem of multitudes bound in marriage yet far from reflecting the unity of Messiah and his beloved Church. Here is not the picture but the realty—hundreds and thousands² of couples living in sin—transgressing common-sense—bidding defiance to Providence. Oh what tears, what agonies, what distresses, are seen on all hands ! Think of men cursing, striking the children they are bound to love, nay, dealing to a wife the murderous blow. Turn to these women—drunken, filthy, bitter—striking and cursing their children and husbands. But what is less endurable, think of the petty temper, of jealousies, of idle words, passing from one to another among those calling themselves Christians. And we see how much has to be achieved ere marriage reaches its high ideal, viz; the fitting symbol of the marriage of Jesus to his well-beloved spouse and makes us exclaim, “Let us be glad and rejoice ; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.” Rev xix. 7.

This leads to consider Divorce. It is evident how far we are from ideal marriage when we turn to our Courts of Law and behold the number of couples separating on grounds other than that which is laid down in the Old Testament and reiterated by Jesus Christ. We cannot but think of the welfare of Society constructed on the principle of true and faithful conduct. But now Divorce is obtained in one State and set aside in another—even when decreed on the ground of violated chastity. It is not a

healthy principle for society to separate husband and wife for the thousand and one reasons which are given. To think of the marital tie set aside for alleged desertion, cruelty, want of support, intemperance! This is the entrance wedge to social disintegration and destruction. The law of marriage throughout the United States should be one and the same.

For one thing, our fair sisters are to be congratulated on the wonderful progress they have made in trades and professions which enable them to lead useful, honorable and independent lives, if travelling their journey alone. "The new woman" is in our days an accomplished fact. The girl can be educated to be independent. She can be bookkeeper, physician, teacher. She occupies a high level compared with her sisters of former times. In view of what is taking place before our eyes, we should say to those who are not intended for matrimony—be ready for work—for duties especially of the higher kind—and your career to the end will be one of usefulness and honor.

PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father, accompany with Thy blessing our meditation on marriage. Teach us from the deep meaning of the words, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh," to reverence home, to regard it as the centre point of Christian civilization, to look upon it as the garden in which the young olive plants grow to beauty and fruitfulness. As the husband and wife are one, so let us behold with delight the unity subsisting between Christ and the fair and beautiful spouse—his pure and loving people. AMEN.

STAY THOU NEAR BY.

BY REV. DAVID MITCHELL.

Stay Thou near by, O God above,
Look on thy child with tender love,
May help to me be always given
To lead me on the way to Heaven.

Stay Thou near by, let grace be mine,
To make me pure and keep me thine,
Through all life's way shine thou on me
That I may ne'er depart from thee.

'Mid toil and care, stay Thou near by,
Be thou my Rock more high than I,
In which my soul will find her rest
And be with thee for ever blest.

Stay Thou near by, that when my foes
Would cast me down to lasting woes,
My bleeding heart will then be free
With hope and joy to look to thee.

Stay Thou near by, that work be done
To honor thee my God alone,
Such work that I lost souls may win
From darkest woes, from hell of sin.

O Saviour dear, stay Thou near by
That when to death I'm drawing nigh;
I may not fear or doubting be,
But still find peace and joy in thee.

And then on wings of faith I'll rise
To thy pure mansions in the skies,
No more my soul shall need to cry,
Oh loving Friend, stay Thou near by.

From the Observer.

THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

SERMON XI.

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—
PHIL. iii.12-13.

The Grecian games furnished the apostle Paul with some of his most striking illustrations and powerful arguments. As a traveller through various cities and regions of Asia Minor, he had frequent opportunities of mingling with the crowds that eagerly gathered to witness the contests for victory in boxing, running, leaping. To his own eye, which was that of a keen observer and profound moralist, such games were ever suggestive of his strivings after victory in the race and battle of life. It is thus interesting to think of Paul in the midst of those eager crowds that were swaying to and fro or throbbing with the quick beating pulse of excitement, as the fight or race went on before them. While they were straining with eye and nerve to catch every movement of the contestants, the scene, and the motions of the combatants or runners, and the cloud of witnesses, were to him all expressive of the race or battle of life, of his own efforts

after victory, or of the countless numbers who from Heaven were interested spectators of his struggles and warfare. As a preacher we may well imagine the Apostle illustrating his discourses with vivid, impressive descriptions of the strivings and races of which his auditors had often been willing spectators—urging upon them as immortal beings, with all the earnestness and eloquence of which he was capable—at one time, to fight the good fight of faith, at another, “to run with patience the race that is set before us,” or at another in such language as that of our text, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God.”

The words—“forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before”—are highly descriptive of the attitude, the eagerness and the determination of the contestant. At the end of the race course is the pole or mark, and upon it the eye of the runner is keenly fixed. His body is so placed as to secure the safest, the easiest, and the most rapid motion. He turns not to the right hand or to the left. The things that are behind, the point from which he started, the spectators of the commencement of the race, the feelings and passions that move them as they watch with eager gaze the progress of the runners, the shouts and cries of the multitude, the stumbles and falls that have already impeded his flight, the obstacles and difficulties he has had thus far to meet and overcome, all the strivings and efforts he has put forth to gain his present point in the race course, nay, everything about himself or others, that

formerly occupied his time and attention, are all completely forgotten. He who turns for one moment to think of any one of these things retards his progress. The successful contestant is unconscious of all such things. His whole body and mind are bound up in one thing. He sees only the mark. He has but one aim and that is to reach it—to reach it before he falls down from exhaustion, to touch it first in order of those who started for the goal. Here was complete absorption in one idea. And all this, which the Apostle had probably witnessed frequently, suggests to his mind the true principle of success in the Christian career. He too forgets the things which are behind; he too reaches forth towards the things that are before; he too has his eye fixed upon the mark for the prize which is ever before him in the race course of life.

We are by no means to understand by the Apostle's words that it is our duty as Christians to obliterate all the past from our minds. Were this the Apostle's meaning, that we should by some means annihilate the past, and enter upon every day as if it were our birthday, or commencement of life, such a course would not only deprive us of the pleasures of the past which can by memory and association be enjoyed over and over again, but also of the lessons of wisdom which it is clearly intended we are to derive from experience. Were this possible we would greatly be the losers. There are times when we love to linger on our childhood's days and youthful years, on the days when we knew but little of those dangerous forces of evil that are in the world, when innocence shone from our

laughing eyes and happy voices. Our memory sheds a halo of glory around the time when we learned our prayers at a mother's knee, or looked up with obedience to the authoritative words of a loving father. Our early lessons at school, our choice of a trade or profession, all the steps by which we advanced from one stage of life to another, the friendships we formed, the tears of childhood, the trials of youth, the difficulties that met us in our onward path, must leave their various traces behind, so that though desirable we will find it impossible to obliterate the past. We are just what the past has made us. The circumstances of our birth, the influences that surrounded our youth, our education at school or college,—such things are traceable in our present features and habits and opinions. As you and I stand before each other at this moment we are—so to speak—the photograph of our past lives. We judge each other by the habits and opinions which we have been forming through many years. And even in the case of a man who has completely changed from a vicious to a virtuous life, or from unbelief and hatred of God to true piety, there are traces of the dark and terrible past which can never be obliterated. Our deeds of wrong, our departures from truth, our pursuit of pleasure, have made indelible marks on our hearts, which certainly in this life can never be wholly removed. We understand the Apostle to mean by the words, "forgetting those things that are behind," not a conscious, determined effort to obliterate from memory the many traces of the past, but that unconsciousness of the things that are

behind which results from the mind being engrossed in one object. We need not confine the illustration of this principle to the domain of religion, for the men who attain success in life—success even in the worldly sense of the word—will be found forgetting the things that are behind in their pursuit of those that are before. Your own experience shows that your most successful efforts have been made when everything seemed to be shut out from your mind, but the present task in which you were engaged. What is the reason of such prosperity attending certain merchants, and failure and ruin marking the career of others? The former are men who are not occupied with a past dead and gone, but who are reaching forth to the things that are before. The student who would master a science or language must not be contented with the acquirements he has made in the past, but he must strive after higher attainments. It is told of a skillful surgeon of our day, that he is so occupied with the operation in which he is engaged that there is nothing else present to his mind. His eye is centered upon the one object. Every motion of his body is made with a view to the purpose before him. His mind is alive only to one thing, and he is so completely absorbed, that he is not aware of the efforts he has put forth, until the operation being over his nerves and muscles relax, and so great is the reaction that he lies down on his couch, and large drops of sweat fall from every pore, and his hands tremble like leaves shaken by the wind. It is in this way all great ends are accomplished. The battle that is to

decide a nation's freedom is won as the result of deep concentration on one point. The discoveries of science are made by men who, forgetting the things that are behind, are reaching towards those that are before. The men who have ascended Alpine heights, the summits of which seemed far from reach of human effort, have climbed on, all unconscious of the dangers of ravines and precipices behind, and not thinking of the hard labor they have undergone to bring them thus far. Such examples then bring before us the meaning of the Apostle's words, "forgetting the things behind." In these words we have the principle of all true success. They set before us an earnest concentration on one object, excluding everything else from our mind, as the only way by which to forget the things that are behind, and secure the end we desire.

Now, apply this to religion. When we begin the Christian race, there are many things to draw away our attention. Before the period of conversion, ours may have been a dark and terrible history. Unlike Paul, whose opposition to Christ was done ignorantly in unbelief, we have sinned against light and against the day. In spite of the warnings and tears and prayers of parents and friends, we have feverishly drunk the cup of pleasure to the very dregs. Our pathway in life may have been through the slime and mud of iniquity. We have been eating the husks the swine did eat. We have thus starved our minds out of their proper food. We have verily revelled in the service of sin and Satan. Now, one turned from all this shame and folly to the love of God,

has this great difficulty to surmount, viz: of not marring his zeal for God's service by a too frequent and morbid remembering of the past. That dread past has so indelibly put its marks upon us, that every time we see these we are seized with an inward horror. This paralyzes our action. The current of our lives flows sluggishly on. Oh in despair we are ready to cry—"Could I but extinguish that horrible past—could I kill the phantom out of my brain—how differently would I follow the Master." Yes, my brother, it is true. It is true you would have presented a different type of fellowship, and therefore every time the thought presses upon your mind, learn to look to Christ the more steadfastly. It is by becoming engrossed in the service of Christ you will forget the past of guilt and shame. But by no other means will you wipe out the sins of youth or unconsecrated manhood. By no effort of mind can you forget the past. All effort to forget only rouses to a higher consciousness. By no sacrifice will you obliterate the past. That will only be putting fuel on the fire that feeds morbid despair. It is only by a true consecration to Christ, it is only by being actuated by one ennobling purpose, that the past will fade from view. "Reach forth to the things that are before." Struggle to attain some worthy end. No longer will the view of the past paralyze your energies. With your mind going forward, everything that is behind will be lost sight of.

But for one who like the Apostle is far advanced in the Christian race, the words "forgetting the things behind" have a very different meaning. There is

a fatal tendency with men to rest with satisfaction upon the efforts they have gained in the past. Had Paul allowed himself thus to dwell upon his past career, how much was there in it to take his mind away from Christ? He had sacrificed position, the pleasures of home, the prospect of worldly advancement. He had travelled far and wide, and had thus endured manifold trials. He had made successful advances upon the strongholds of heathendom. He now stood high in the estimation of his fellow-apostles. Had he contemplated all this with satisfaction, would it not have retarded his progress? But for the Apostle to think of his own sufferings or conflicts or victories was impossible, for his mind was ever filled with an animating and ennobling purpose. And so, brethren, with us who have been for years—it may be—the disciples of Christ. Let us beware of looking with delight on the past. Let us not congratulate ourselves on our past progress. If our hearts are truly fixed upon a worthy object, let the word “forward” be our cry. Let us be so bound up in the progress we are making each moment, that we shall never think of past victories. Oh! Remember the past can do nothing for us. It is gone from us and all the efforts we made, all the difficulties we surmounted, all the points we gained, these are past and gone. They have been stepping stones, but our feet are now planted on steps higher up. The waters we have sailed over, it is true, once bore up our bark in their bosom, but we are supported by other waters now. The bread which kept us in life yesterday will not keep us in life to-day. So long as

progress is to be made, so long as new points are to be attained, so long as the race is not run, there are new efforts called for, new difficulties to be overcome, there is ever a strain upon our body and mind. These words are truly descriptive of a Christian's life, "forgetting the things that are behind and reaching towards those things which are before."

"Reaching forth unto those things which are before," express then not insensibility to the past, or a mere inert forgetfulness, but unconsciousness of the things that are behind, arising from the mind being animated by one object, and bound up in it. Those things that are before and the mark for the prize do not express one and the same idea. The mark—it is true—is one of the things that are before, but there are other things that lie along the line of race which are helps and guides to the runners. "The foot race was run in the stadium, an oblong area, open at one end and rounded in a semi-circular form at the other, along the sides of which were the tiers of seats on which the spectators sat. The judge was stationed by the goal, which was clearly visible from one end of the stadium to the other." The goal was generally a long pole on which the laurel crown was hung. So that as well as this pole, there would be a variety of objects in the line of the race course, that would easily be taken in by the eye of each contestant—these diminishing in number as he advanced towards the goal. The pole marked the end of the course, but to an eager runner it would not give an accurate idea of distance. Objects immediately before

him, such as stones lying on his way or small poles indicating degrees of distance, would be a considerable aid. Then again between two equal competitors, the principal mark would not supply a sufficient test of strength and speed, but as they hurried past an object on the course, their relative speed would be instantly known, and greater force and strain be applied. We are all familiar with the influence which intermediate stages have upon us as we are pursuing our way towards some more distant place. Every mile stone on the road, although it cannot impart life or strength, speaks to us of progress. As the eye catches it in the distance, we insensibly put more force into our steps. As we ascend a mountain, every peak becomes our guide. The sailor even has imaginary lines drawn across the ocean by which to measure distance and speed. In striving to attain these points, we may be said to be "reaching forth towards those things that are before."

What, then, my brethren, is analagous to this in the Christian race? To answer this we must endeavor to understand what the Apostle means by the mark for the prize. You at once see that the mark and the prize were two distinct objects. In the Grecian game the one was a pole and the other a crown. And in all contests we distinguish between the mark and the prize. At school the mark for the prize is a certain amount of knowledge. The prize may be anything you like—book or medal. In business the mark for the prize of success is knowledge, experience and integrity. The prize may be money or

influence. And in the same way the mark for the prize of the Christian is *perfection of character*. In this case the prize is the blessedness of Heaven. That perfection of character is the mark, and the blessedness of heaven the prize, is evident from the context. In the 11th verse the resurrection of the dead is a term denoting the happiness of the saints. That in the Apostle's estimation is the end to be gained. But the means to attain that end is following after Christ, "that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." This is prefaced with the words, "not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect." But such perfection is only before the Apostle's mind. He does not possess it. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, or to be thus perfect, but this one thing I do. I press toward the mark for the prize."

If then the mark for the prize is perfection of character, the things which are before us, and are marking intermediate stages between our present point and the goal that lies at the end of the race, are the various degrees and qualities of Christian character that are steps toward ultimate perfection. We should be ever reaching forth towards more love, greater devotion, profounder wisdom, higher knowledge of the truth. The Christian runner can never be satisfied with his present attainments. What he has gained this day is now one of the things that are behind, and which will be immediately forgotten as his eye fixes itself upon another point that is yet to be attained. So long as he is in this life it must ever be a progress. As

he conquers one sin, it only reveals another to be overcome. As he feels the delightful influence of the first rays of the love of God that have fallen upon him, it only makes him still open his heart to receive more and more of that love. As to the knowledge of God he will feel as Newton felt with regard to the knowledge of God's works in nature, that he has but picked up a pebble here and there on the sea shore, while on that shore itself there are possibly countless pearls lying all unseen by human eye, and in that ocean there are myriads of precious stones entirely beyond his reach. As to his faith in Jesus, he will truly realize that all his past acts of faith are nothing, that as he endeavors to exercise more faith how needful is the prayer, "Lord, help mine unbelief," and that before him lie countless opportunities for exercising a faith, the strength of which he has never yet even conceived. As he rejoices in the spirituality of feeling with which he can now draw near to God in prayer, he will remember with humility how many Christian brethren have attained to heights of spiritual thought and feeling that tower far above him. And as he strains to advance the name and kingdom of Christ Jesus, other work will press upon him. New powers will seem to arise within him. A field of large enterprise, of new possibilities, will spread out before him. He will feel that as yet he has done nothing, and that every moment he must be up and doing. "Forward," not "backward," is the christian's motto. "Reaching forth unto the things which are before," is not only characteristic of him, but as a phrase it is suggestive of

his life and work. "Reaching forth towards the things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize."

The degrees and stages that mark a Christian's career are all pointing to their end—*perfection*. Now, whence does the Apostle derive the idea of perfection of character? Evidently, not from himself, nor from any of his fellow-apostles, nor from his brethren in the Church. Looking at himself and all others he can only see imperfection, failure, debts. But the ideal of perfection is the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be perfect even as He was perfect, is the mark for the prize. In Christ is the highest possible pattern of human excellence. He not only exhibited in the greatest degree those qualities of honesty, truthfulness, zeal, which men at all times admire and value. But a heavenliness of purity and goodness shone from him, such as no man had ever witnessed before. His was the highest form of devotion. His communion with the spirits of the upper world was perfect. His sympathy with men was so subtle and sensitive that at the touch of a woman his manhood or virtue sensibly went out to her. While the very presence of the mere professor or hypocritical Pharisee seemed to influence Him as sensitively as the touch of the operator does the magnetic wire. In Christ was purity incarnate—transcending all the maxims and speculations of philosophers. Here was holiness of character and conversation, such as had never been witnessed upon the earth.

What the Apostle conceived Christ to be, he resolved to become. He knew that Christ became like unto men in

all points, saving that of sin, in order that His followers in turn might in every particular become like unto Him. To attain likeness to Christ, he determined to press forward.

We must notice here, my brethren, the grand difference between the mark in the Christian race and that of the text. The latter is at a well known and easily defined distance from the starting point. But as perfection of character can only be attained at the end of life—when death shall separate us from sin and all its woes—the race of each believer will continue throughout his earthly career. We must remember that, just as in certain lights, to the traveller a mountain or tree, or house seems near at hand, when it is really many miles away; so every step toward Christ, every advance we make in likeness to Him, will only reveal how far we are from His character. As we journey on the object upon which our eye is fixed will seem always to recede from us. Sometimes we will lose sight of it altogether, and when in despair we think we have lost it, again it will burst upon our view. In the days of health and vigorous manhood, as we may be but half way on the journey, the goal will sometimes seem far away. And yet the Christian does not despair, for so long as he sees the mark he may be sure he is advancing towards it. If he is laid low on a bed of sickness, from which he does not hope to recover, strange to say that mark towards which he had ever been striving, appears to have been brought near him, and should he in God's mercy be spared to rise up once more he need not wonder that, as he walks forth into the world again with new life

and hopes, the goal or mark for the prize will appear now far in the distance. And when at last the Christian dies, the experience he will have will be akin to that of the disciples when, after the storm had been allayed at the command of their Master, their ship was brought suddenly to the shore. As the Grecian runner at length caught the pole on which the garland was hung, so the Christian dying in the arms of Jesus will seem to have caught hold of him at last. Clasping the mark for the prize, the spirit of a man, as soon as it leaves this world, will mount to the skies, to receive from the JUDGE—who had watched the race all along, who had secretly supported and cheered the runner—the never fading crown of life.

Brethren, let us comfort ourselves with this thought that not as in the Grecian game only one or at the most two or three of the contestants received the prize; in the Christian race every one who presses forward will be sure to get from day to day the blessing of God's strengthening grace, and will in the end attain to likeness of the holy Jesus. We need not despair that others, who started along side of us in the Christian race, are now apparently far before us. Be it ours still to press forward, sure that in the end we will gain the victory. There will be honor for the child who has commenced the race. Dying in the Lord, he will have the likeness of Jesus. There will be victory for the young brother or sister, called in early life from this world of sin and tears, for such will have become like the Saviour. There will be victory for the aged and bowed down. The features of Christ may not be seen for

the scars with which life's battle has marred their visage, or for the decay and weakness of age ; but when they shall awake, it will be with the likeness of God, and then they shall see him as He is. Let us make the Apostle's words our own, "I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." You see he seems to put the prize second in importance to the mark for the prize. As much as to say, make it your one object to attain the mark which will entitle you to the prize. Do not think of the prize only. Think first and foremost of the mark. Be earnest about attaining to perfection. The time will come when you will consider with satisfaction the prize. But you have nothing to do with the prize just now. As it is unworthy the scholar to study for the sake of a mere prize, and as he ought to work only with the view of acquiring the knowledge that is requisite for the prize ; as it would bemean a soldier to think only of the glory arising from victory, and not to give himself heart and soul to the work to be done to gain the battle ; as it degrades a merchant, or physician, or minister of the gospel to be ever striving for wealth, fee or reward, and not to have a single eye to the special object of his profession ; so it is dangerous for the follower of Christ to be ever thinking of Heaven only—of future joys—of everlasting honors. Let him remember that in setting his mind upon rewards he may overlook what is necessary to obtain them. In thinking only of Heaven he may forget the way to reach it. In dwelling constantly upon the blessedness, to which the service of Christ leads, he may fail to remem-

ber that following Christ demands earnest effort, a close walk with God, and many deeds of self-sacrifice. May it be ours then to be able to say—"This one thing I do—I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
 Of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrim's pride,
From ev'ry mountain side,
 Let freedom ring.

OUR GLORIOUS FOURTH.

SERMON XII.

Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord.—Ps. XXXIII. 12.

Such words coming from the lips of a king have a special significance. It is well for us to give heed to their meaning. Many a one in David's circumstances would have thought of the nation as blessed in her rulers, her statesmen, warriors, navies, armies, or in her laws, her education, her riches. But the king of Israel looked away from these to God. He could conceive of no strength, or wisdom, or nobility, if God were blotted out of men's thoughts.

Accepting this as true that, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord," it is an important question for every nation to consider and answer, "Who is our Lord?" Are we a Christian nation?

"Are WE, the people of these United States, a Christian nation?" is being agitated in many quarters. You will remember the society which was formed many years ago, whose object was to obtain the insertion in the Constitution of the United States of an expression of faith in God. Whether this will ever succeed is doubtful, but it is one of the straws which indicate how the

wind blows. "Are we a Christian people?" are words on every one's lips in presence of the fearful disclosures that fill our public prints. Let us put this question to ourselves. The crimes that are being committed can only be compared with the worst times of Rome, when monsters in human shape occupied the throne and the high offices of the State. Sodom and Gomorrah have become bywords as expressive of the grossest gratifications of the animal passions, but in our country we have evidence of the existence of all the different grades of sensuality from forms most refined to those most brutal and loathesome. There is not a day but we hear of horrible murders, of suicides from despair, of daring burglaries, of incendiaryism, of forgers and counterfeiters. It is impressed upon us by our recent experiences that there is a large class in every city who are restrained from violence only by the strong arm of the law, and who are ready at any moment to pillage property and attack our liberties. "Are we a Christian Nation?" with such a record as this, presses itself upon the attention of every right thinking man and woman in the land. With the stench of these crimes going up to Heaven, how must we appear before Heaven's King? How do the pure and unfallen angels regard us? What are we in the eyes of other nations? And especially when as is the case the vast mass of our people, to whose door cannot be layed such crimes as we have depicted, are still the worshippers of mammon thinking not of God, or of laying up eternal riches in Heaven, who are

laboring without thought of the necessities of their spiritual being. It seems rather more appropriate to ask ourselves, “Are we not an idolatrous people? Have we not set up mammon in the place of God? Are we not in the grand race for riches rudely jostling one another out of the way, trampling under foot our brothers and sisters, and thinking only of what will minister to our pride and ambition?”

In answer to the question, “Are we a Christian nation,” we have to point first of all to the origin of this people. There were, it is true, various centres in the country occupied by representatives of different nationalities, but still these representatives were more or less subjects of Christianity. The national mind turns to New England as having been the nucleus from which this great people has grown. The story is widely known and quickly told of how a Puritan settlement, escaping from religious persecution, sought a home away from their native soil, where they could enjoy spiritual liberty—the right of worshipping God according to conscience, and of observing their own form of Church polity without fear of the face of man. We should remember of what stuff these men were made. They were not merely loyal to Christ, but they had inherited a system of doctrine and a rigid practice of morals, which, while exciting the derision of the thoughtless, made them feared and respected on all hands. They were men of the true martyr spirit. They would rather die than yield to any encroachment upon their rights. Their system of doctrine, which recognized in God the

righteous disposer of all events, gave them a faith in Providence which made them strong to resist their spiritual foes. It was in the martyr spirit they came to this country, and encountered unheard of difficulties and surmounted impassible barriers. They suffered banishment from their native land—from their home and kindred—rather than suffer the tyranny of their spiritual rulers. These men were Christians in a way in which few to-day are Christians. The Bible meant something with them. They regarded it as the inspired word of God—the book for daily nourishment, the guide of their lives, the comfort of their dying moments. They judged the worship of God a necessity of man's nature, and that it was incumbent to adore Him in a Sanctuary. They loved Zion and her ordinances. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts,” was the burden of their song. These were the men who would travel miles amid snow and storms rather than their seats in God's House should be empty. Their first thought was where shall we build a home for the Lord. They put the construction of the Sanctuary in importance before the building of their dwellings, or the sowing of their fields. They realized the meaning of the Saviour's command, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” And then the Sabbath was their delight. Whatever toil and danger they had to undergo during the week—in the night and the day—in the cold and the heat—in storm and pestilence, there was nothing that would interfere with their observance of the Lord's day. “Remember the Sabbath day to

keep it holy," meant with them a command from Heaven. Only at the cry for mercy, or in view of a pressing necessity, would they swerve from the path trodden in faith by their fathers. The hours of the Sabbath were sacred in their eyes, and they were spent in a manner wholly incomprehensible to the wise-acres of the present age—they were spent in praise and prayer and in meditation on God's word. The morals of this people were of course severe. But they were a noble generation. These were men to do battle with wild animals, with fires, with pestilences, with droughts and famines. These were men to lay the foundations of an empire broad and majestic—to give laws and legislation in accordance with the Bible—and to build up a nation of God fearing children—of stalwart sons and virtuous daughters. In the same way, we may enquire concerning the origin of New York and the surrounding country. It was a Dutch Colony that first unfurled the banner of civilization. What were these Hollanders in religion? Were they Pagan? Were they idolaters? Were they not children of the covenants and the promises? Did they not bring with them their precious Bibles, their Catechisms, their Confessions, their Church? We have their noble representatives still in many churches and congregations throughout the land. They may have been somewhat philosophic in temperament, but they were sound in the faith. They bequeathed to their children a noble inheritance of truth. Nor was the rich and fertile state of Pennsylvania without her religious foundation. It has not happened to her as

to New York to have her original settlers borne into oblivion by the accumulating pressure of heterogeneous nationalities. There to this day “the friend” is to be seen walking the street with solemn step, the representative of a race of men simple in their manners, charitable in their deeds, reverential towards God, and sensitive as to insidious temptations from the world. They are a noble race—raised up by Providence as a protest against civil and religious corruption—an austere class of men living apart from their fellows, because they had a conscience, and would not be ruled by king or faction in matters pertaining to the soul.

This nation we thus see was founded in Christianity. What has been its history? A certain class of Historians and Philosophers behold in it nothing but the history of political faction. And certainly there is much truth in the observation. But if political faction is to be brought as an objection to the Christian character of a nation, then what people under the sun can be Christian? What is the history of Great Britain but that of faction, strife, of political and religious creed? What is the history of France but the alternations of despotism and democracy? The truth is that all society is very imperfect, only reaching lofty ideals through failure. But at the same time there may be along side the history of revolution, of corruption, and of immorality, that of progress in all that refines and elevates man. Blots on the body corporate of the nation do not disprove that it is essentially Christian. Christianity has never given a people absolute

perfection, but only the conditions that are necessary to the attainment of perfection. And hence while the history of the United States has been one of party—showing a constant friction between opposing factions, and ever revealing an awful depth of moral and political corruption, yet it is the history of Christian progress. The life of the Church has kept pace with that of the people. At no period can we say that the nation dethroned God, and set up the abstractions of reason in His place. Protestantism in this Country found new fields for her energy and enterprise, and freed from the forms, the prejudices, and denominational strifes and jealousies of the old countries, her progress has been one of triumph and success. The soil of America was congenial to Protestant truth, and there without depending upon the smiles and favor of the great, or fearing the persecution of her foes, this truth took deep root, and during an eventful history, has ever been sending out strong and mighty branches laden with rich and precious fruits. It is true the Church has not been one, and like the Church in Britain and every protestant country, has been divided into different sects. But this we regard as an evidence not of weakness, but of the way in which Christianity has adapted herself to the various tastes and constitutions of men, and resulting largely from all peoples and sects coming to these shores. In other countries denominations have grown out of persecutions, and corruptions. But in this country they have rather been the forms of growth in which spiritual life has manifested itself. We rejoice

in the triumphs of all the Churches other than our own. We are glad to witness in the Methodists an army of valiant soldiers, who with spiritual songs gird themselves for the battle of life. It is no sign of weakness in Christianity to see the Episcopalian Church ministering to large numbers who might not find the Presbyterian congenial and edifying. We rejoice to behold the advances made by Baptists, and all the sects who hold by the cross of Christ. We are not unmindful, too, that Churches which we may not regard as sound in doctrine, are found not retarding, but advancing the Christian cause. All these Churches have been growing silently and steadily during the years gone by. They have been spreading themselves over the length and breadth of the land. They have been saturating the nation with Gospel truth and Gospel influences. While thus speaking warmly of the work accomplished by sister Churches, we may well be pardoned if we say a word of the wonderful progress of the Congregational, and more especially of the Presbyterian Churches. There is not a city in the land, but where they are represented by beautiful buildings and large congregations. There is scarcely a village or hamlet but what has its humble Church, and its flock of Christian men and women. We look to Scotland not merely as a Presbyterian but as a Christian nation, and yet the Presbyterian Church of America alone has more churches and pastors than all the denominations in Scotland put together. We say it not in pride or boasting. We remember with delight the glo-

rious work accomplished by the Presbyterians of Ireland and of Scotland. We love to think of her noble army of martyrs, who have suffered and died to preserve their sacred rights and privileges. We speak with reverence of their great preachers, giants in Isreal; who have declared with power the whole counsels of God, who have not been afraid to call Jesus Christ their Master and Lord, and preach His salvation to a dying world. But we also rejoice that the off-spring of the Presbyterian Church of the mother countries has not been weak of body and puny of mind, but that she is now a giantess of comely proportions, and is doing in every part of the land valiant work for the Master.

This nation has thus been Christian in her history. Has she only been Christian in name? is the grand question which meets us here. It may be said of a people as it was said of the Church of Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." As a person may be Christian in everything but the reality—in parentage, in baptism, in knowledge; so we as a nation may point with pride to our Christian progenitors, to our Churches, and Bibles and Sacraments, and yet be far from Christian at heart. In the outward sense we are without doubt a Christian country. We acknowledge Christ. We prize the Bible. We believe in immortality, in Heaven, and also in Hell—one would say from the constant use of the word by profane swearers; yet who will say that we are a Christian people in the sense of loving God universally, and living according to his laws? How many thousands in

our midst are the sworn enemies of religion—of law and order? In one part of the country we see the great blotch of polygamy, in another the dark spot of political corruption. The vice of intemperance like a cancerous disease has its roots in the heart of the people, and its ramifying branches all over the body corporate. Dishonesty in trade is known to exist on all hands. There is—we hope it is, passing away—an open, professed admiration of clever scoundrels. All this, and much more than can now be named, would almost lead us to conclude that our Christianity is a sham and reproach. And yet it would be most unfair to reason in this way. It would be as unjust as to conclude that the Continent of America is a barren and miserable land, because here the bare rock rises to the surface, and there lies the marshy waste. Notwithstanding rocks and marshes innumerable, we know that this Country is the most productive on the globe, that here with the soil we have we could raise food sufficient for the inhabitants of the World. And so too in spite of the crimes and vices that are as scars and sores on the body of the nation, we are a Christian people in the true sense. God has not left himself without witness amongst us. There are ever the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. A deep sense of right moves the heart of the people. One of the most healthy signs of the Times is a Nation's righteous indignation. Woe be to that land so sunken in idolatry and crime that it has no heart left. There the wicked may rule without let or hindrance. But woe be to the wicked when their conduct rouses a nation's

wrath. Who can resist the national sense of right? There comes a moment in the history of a people, that is sound at heart, when it rises as one man to wipe out its disgraces. Then it is felt to be true that the voice of the people is the voice of God. We seem now to be approaching such a moment, and, in the fact that there is a deep sense of right, we perceive an evidence that we are a Christian people. Our religious observances show the same thing. The Bible is held in reverence by the nation. It has inspired our laws. It has moulded our thoughts. It is the leaven of our Literature. It is the Book on which we imprint our lips as we swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Its poetry we employ for praise. It is the companion of our solitude. It is our friend in affliction. Neglected as it may be in the midst of our active life, how widely is it prized in the hour of affliction and death! And what shall we say of the observance of the Lord's day? True and sad to tell, it is trampled under foot in the most shameless manner, nowhere more than in the city where we dwell. But why have we one day in seven for rest? Answer that, you who are clamoring for its repeal. Answer me, you who will not guard the day with restrictions Answer me, all ye who spend it in dancing, drinking, gambling, and the thousand other devil-inspired modes of its observance? Do we owe it to political influence? Do we owe it to the superior wisdom of men? Nay, it is God's day—and we have this day for rest, because the Christian people have cherished it and remembered to keep it holy. It is

wonderful when we think of it that notwithstanding the wickedness which prevails within our borders, the Sabbath is observed in every State, and by millions of our population; that it is prized not only for its rest from labor, but also for its spiritual privileges; and that it is employed so extensively for training the young and rising generation in the knowledge and service of God. With our American Sabbath as it is, can we be said not to be a Christian nation? Nor would we forget our Thanksgiving observance—a day truly used by many for evil purposes, but a day hallowed in the hearts of the people—a day handed down to us from the Pilgrim fathers—a day for remembering God with praise for the bounties with which He has crowned the year. And in recounting the evidence that shows we are a Christian nation, I am not unmindful of our educational and charitable institutions—of our Homes for orphans, our Resting Places for wayfarers, our Asylums for the afflicted and the aged. “Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord”—whose God inspires it with brotherly love. And what shall we say of the Charity which has so frequently stretched out its arms to the untold numbers suffering from famine, fire, and pestilence. True the nations have again and again sent offerings for the relief of poor and starving ones. Yes, the world, by our Chicago, Boston, St. John fires and on account of devastations by storm and drought, has been moved by an electric sympathy towards these towns and territories in their waste and ruin. Yes, thanks to God Almighty for such grand out-bursts of heart! But how

describe the benevolence prompting our own people everywhere to sublime sacrifices of money, of property and in actual service. Where such charity or rather *love* reigns Christianity is not dead. It is not even asleep. America has also been a Missionary nation. From all our Churches ministers have gone forth to win souls to Christ. They have scattered the Bible and its magnificent literature throughout all lands. With the national Standard—with the Stars and Stripes—they have not failed to plant the banner of the Cross—everywhere—amid Lapland snows as well as the most favored and cultivated spots of the earth.

My brethren, we all love the glorious Fourth. While warning against the careless use of fire and against mere frolic, yet we feel as boys and girls when the Day comes round. We go in for a good time. We love to spend the day with the children. It is our delight to fire crackers, to send rockets into the skies, to have a jolly time around the family board, with friends dropping in without ceremony. It is a day for right royal welcome to the best we have. The National flag floating everywhere in the breeze rouses the patriotic spirit within our breasts. God forbid we should ever have another war, either amongst ourselves, or with other people. But every time the Fourth comes it rouses the National enthusiasm and makes us rise to heroic feelings the moment an enemy stepping upon our shores is spoken of. Who would not sacrifice life and limb to protect our soil, our homes, every shred of our civilization? What an army

of dear young people who love their country well and would not grudge to give their lives at any moment to save her honor. Think of these Christian Endeavorers gathered in Boston—of their spirit, of their pluck. Think of “the New Woman” brave and Godly as seen in these hosts of blooming beautiful girls ! Think what war would mean with these young, pure, courageous hearts enthused with words like these, “Am I a Soldier of the Cross ?” “All hail the power of Jesus name ?” “My faith looks up to Thee.” Their march forward would be the tread of faith. Their fighting would be done with the Sword of the Spirit. Their feet would be shod with the gospel of peace. Yes, let righteous war come and we feel the bone and sinew are ready. Courageous hearts would be up and doing. But we are rather thinking of Spiritual war and strife. “Righteousness exalteth a nation.” Let the American people look their dangers in the face. Let them think of temptation in the light of the prodigious wealth God has given them. Let them remember our warfare with Satan and sin must lie in the line of Church and Sunday School work. May we ever be brave to do our work—to look duty in the face—to go forward with one thought of honoring King Jesus and thus securing lasting benefits for our beloved land.

My native Country, thee
Land of the noble free,
 Thy name I love ;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills,
My heart with rapture thrills,
 Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
 Sweet freedom's song ;
Let mortal tongues awake,
Let all that breathe partake,
Let rocks their silence break,
 The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of liberty,
 To Thee we sing ;
Long may our land be bright,
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by Thy might,
 Great God, our King !

Rest for the toiling hand,
Rest for the anxious brow,
Rest for the weary, way-sore feet,
Rest from all labor now.

SATURDAY HALF HOLIDAY.

SERMON XIII.

And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.—LUKE xxiii. 54.

This verse relates an interesting incident. The day on which the crucifixion of Christ took place was that immediately preceding the Sabbath. It was Friday. The Jews held this as a time of preparation for the Sabbath. This custom had been handed down from antiquity. Jehovah so hallowed the day of rest and worship that, when the Children of Israel were miraculously fed with manna in the wilderness, they were commanded and enabled to gather a double portion on the preceding day, to have sufficient to carry them over the Sabbath. As the Passover took place in the year of the death of Messiah on the day preceding the Sabbath, there were on this account special duties to be performed, making the preparation of more than ordinary importance. We conjecture that, besides doing what was requisite for the due observance of the Sabbath, the Jews prepared their victuals, and attended to everything necessary to enable them to observe the Seventh Day without labor or interruption. This was evidently a

wise and necessary provision; else many of the things required to be done on the Friday, to secure the proper remembrance of the Sabbath, must needs be transferred to the Sacred Day itself, and thus sadly mar its religious exercises.

Having discussed elsewhere the question of the change of the weekly period of rest and worship from the seventh to the first day, we at once see it to be expedient and proper for us to devote the spare time at our command, on the day preceding the Lord's day, in attending to a variety of duties and thus make sure of our Sabbath being unaccompanied with toil and care. This would imply the vast multitude of workers being set free from labor on Saturday at an early hour. Were we to realize the particular ends for which the one day in seven is given, it would be felt by us to be of paramount importance to do everything in our power to make it a period of repose and give due heed to that public worship which is enjoined. It may seem to be impracticable, finding it hard as it is to set apart twenty-four hours in the week, to make further demands upon the time of the workers. To enjoy, however, the ideal Sabbath it would be necessary to have a part of Saturday to ourselves. For one thing much could be done to save work on Sunday. We could provide our food, have wood and coal at hand to light the fire, and a good deal might be done to reduce cooking to as small an item as possible. Requisite purchases might be made so as not to infringe unduly upon the time of stores. "The

Cottar's Saturday Night" is one of the best productions of Robert Burns, not merely because of the beauty of its expression, but for the reason that it describes a reality. The work of the week is done, and nothing except what is required is left for the morrow. The cows have been milked. All the animals are fed. The cheerful supper is spread. The farmer—proud man—takes his accustomed seat. His wife has finished her task of cooking. The table is all laid. Around the board there are the children, ranging from young womanhood down to the lads and lassies in or not yet in their teens. There is—I am certain—the bright babe on the mother's lap. A young lad is noticed there, whose big and bashful glances towards the modest daughter, utter volumes of meaning in regard to her future career. The father reverently bows his head—all doing likewise—while he utters heartfelt gratitude to the Heavenly Father for granting him and his so much store, and blessing them with the food spread on their board. The meal is, amidst much fun and laughter, brought to a close. But all is not ended yet. For the husbandman, the priest of his family as every father ought to be, brings out the big Ha' (hall) Bible and after chanting the praise of God,

"He wails a portion with judicious care."

The passage chosen is one concerning some of the heroes of Scripture. He reads it solemnly. His manner is that of reverence. Then they all bend their knees, and the

priest-like father pours out his soul in earnest prayer to the Almighty. That prayer is couched in no false words. It is genuine as the air, pure as the crystal fount, true as gold. When they have risen, what a sweet pathos is seen in their well contented happy faces! The young lad, scarcely looking to the lassie before them all yet heartily made welcome, bids them good bye; but as a sort of accident is followed by the maiden coy, and doubtless something passes betwem them as pledge of mutual love. No wonder the poet exclaims,

“ From scenes like these old Scotia’s grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad.
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
An honest man’s the noblest work of God.”

They retire early, and oh how deep the repose of that family—uninterrupted save by the dream of being in church and awaking its echoes with melodious praise! We could describe many a scene similar to this taking place in our cities too. In the course of my ministry I have known many an artisan whose one thought, after faithful attention to work, was of his family. There is the house in the crowded tenement—it may be—neat, tidy—a palace indeed to him and his. It is the custom of the employers whom he serves to let their men go free at two in the afternoon. He walks home, and on the way his eye falls upon a top with string and he buys it for little Johnnie, with other things in the line of food and clothing he brings with him. He is received with

loving kiss, not only from his young and lovely wife, but from the circle round. The purchases for the morrow are made at an early hour. Then comes the family meal. He may not be rich, but there is wealth of love on that table. What merriment as the wife hands round dainties made by her skillful hands! Then what a night is that of Saturday in a proper working-man's home! There is nothing but fun with the children till sleep gently closes their eye-lids. The father is employed in some task—elaborating an invention of his own. How deftly deals blow on blow upon the iron! How patiently he works out his thought! And all the time the mother is carefully ironing tiny clothes, and sewing garments, and scrubbing floor, and shining stove, and thinking of the calm of the morrow. When they too close the day with worship, have they not made fitting preparation for the Lord's day and for Church and Sunday School? Yes! indeed, it is beautiful.

But I am thinking at this moment of another scene witnessed by me. Called on Saturday night to a home made sad by sickness, I spent some time with them, and as it was drawing near mid-night my thought was to gather them around me for prayer. But where was the the head of the house? Not yet returned. How could that be? Oh, his wife replied, "He works in a dry-good's store and it does not close till midnight, or even later." And where is Tom? I ask, "He is with a grocer who keeps open as long as he can. Tommie never gets home till one in the morning." "Oh, how sorry I am for him!"

I cry in distress, "but where is Jeannie,?" "Oh! you know, Jeannie, is a dressmaker, and she is sewing hard in the other room to have a gown ready in the morning for a grand lady who must have it for Church." "Why is it possible," I ask, "that the lady you refer to would keep your young daughter slaving at this rate?" There they are, these suffering ones. For them no half holiday, not even "letting up" at ten o'clock! But they must *toil*, *TOIL*, *TOIL*, making two days really of Saturday. And when one thinks it is not much better with the rest of the week, the wonder is how that sterling man heading his family can be in his pew so punctually every Lord's day. His absence would create alarm in me. And yet these are two or three individuals taken at random out of the laboring millions, for whom there is no refreshing holiday, for whom there is not a ray of light, or the least cheer. But it is *work*, *WORK*, *WORK*, not only all day long on Saturday, but through the week—life is nothing but slavery. There is something fearful in the thought—the difference between the wealthy and leisurely, whose time is their own, rolling in their splendid equipages, seated in their divan chairs or luxurious sofas, their walls dazzling with pictures, and rooms filled with costly ornaments, their floors luxurious with rich carpets. What beds to lie in! What meals to partake of!! What clothes to wear!!! And turn down another street a little farther east or west, and can it be? These tenement houses crushed and crammed! They are built tier on tier up into the skies. There are houses to the rear—a crowd of

suffering humanity. Here are toilers indeed—the mass coming to these squalid houses later and later as the week goes on, until the end of the week when it is a sad, long unbroken day—a day of toil and anguish. And think of the fevers, pestilences, whooping-coughs, measles, going on all the time. No wonder that floor is dirty, that room filthy, the walls black and slimy. There is no half holiday for them. In such places there is no thought of Sabbath. Not one in 10,000 goes to church. The Sunday comes, and then there is the debauch continued from Saturday night. Crowds flock from such misery to steam-boats and railroads on Sunday. The taverns are doing their biggest business. There is nothing but wretchedness and despair. What of the children—dirty, ragged, bare-footed even in winter? How can we get such people to Church? How have these young ones to Sunday School? No. In the wretched round of labor, and drunkenness, and sickness, the thing is almost impossible.

Now, let us say here we go in heartily for a Saturday half-holiday being well established in behalf of all these classes. With regard to the mass of laboring men and women there is many a problem to be solved before this ideal can be reached. How to attack the fort of darkness and sin is the question. We feel that much good to this end could be done were all thoughtful men and women giving themselves to the task of alleviating the suffering condition of the masses. The work must begin with an attempt to regulate the house-accommodations of the people. It is obvious that the multitude are too closely

huddled together. They have to be scattered in some way. Houses not overcrowded would be one important step gained. Then there should be some way of educating the people. Not only must the air and light and water be let into these congested tenements, but there must be a path opened for them to acquire knowledge of themselves, of the laws of nature, of what will contribute to mental and moral improvement. We do not believe much can be done without religion being taught and impressed upon them. How to reach this is the difficulty before us. What could be done in restraining intemperance, the certain cause of so much harm? What could be accomplished by missionaries being sent in their midst to instruct, to turn away the obstacles of ignorance, prejudice and evil habits? What might now be gained by well equipped nurses going to hovels where sickness, poverty and wretchedness abound? What might result from our noble women taking in hand the task of giving friendly aid to the needy? How to get the children and young men and women to Sunday School? How to bring these crowds under the influences of the Gospel? All these and many others are matters demanding earnest study on the part of true patriots. The policy of letting well—or rather ill—alone has been too long followed. There must be inroads by Christian agencies upon such dens. The line of separation between the Churches and people must be done away with. If Christians could be set to work, not to talk, but to do something in the way of genuine, discriminating benevolence, we might begin to feel some confidence as to the

removal of obstacles in the way. For one thing, it is certain that the masses must be taken hold of, improved, encouraged, elevated. They must be lifted up to the point of doing for themselves. Meanwhile, granted that a Saturday half-holiday for the mass of toilers is far from reached, yet could there not be something done to shorten hours of labor? To cease work at nine or even ten o'clock would be felt to be a great result. No matter how little the relief at first, there would be something gained. It is evident the evil presses upon us now. Clear it is that it is growing as the years pass. It must be manifest that the chronic condition of the poor is becoming more intense. There is danger to society itself from all this. We know not when the hidden fires will burst into flames. The terrible pressure has to be lessened, or there will be eruptions from which we all must suffer. For our part there is the evil. It must be dealt with. If not, we are in danger of going back to a state worse than any we have on record. There is the awful thought pressing upon us that the time is coming—if it has not yet appeared—when we must sink back in despair from the task of reform, and let the mischief magnify itself beyond relief or remedy. There are questions underlying which ought to receive attention from our municipal governments, from our State legislatures, from Congress!

With regard to the large class of skilled workers the remedy against prolonged toil is in their own hands—aided by public sentiment, by philanthropists, by the

press. How much indeed has been gained in the past, till now in many fields of work, the Saturday half-holiday has become an accomplished fact. Many businesses, particularly wholesale, have greatly shortened their hours. Law offices and banks close early on Saturday. In Great Britain this matter has long since taken positive shape. The period of work during the week is curtailed. The half-holiday on Saturday is largely secured. We are far from having—strictly speaking—the half-holiday. Many who are enjoying a respite have still to labor far in the afternoon. We want to see the working-classes free from their tasks at an early hour.

Were this universal, what a time there would be for recreation! In the summer, well regulated excursions both on water and land could be enjoyed. There would be freedom to engage in many of our popular games—base ball, tennis, croquet, and all the rest. Now that the bicycle has come to stay, what nice, pleasant journeys could be had to distant places—imparting the glow of health to the cheek of youth, giving muscular strength to the man and woman escaped from work. Our children have such leisure in abundance, but what delightful recreation their parents might have in their company! In winter there might be out-door sport on the ice—skaters meteor-like glancing along the frozen surfaces of rivers and lakes—curlers shooting their stones with unerring eye towards the goal. What opportunity for repairing to the public library which should be open for the purpose, to the reading-room, or to the quiet nook

at home where the treasures of literature can be read! The ways and methods of genuine enjoyment cannot be numbered. And our workers would be all the better for it at their tasks. We do not believe business would suffer, but rather the reverse. The experiment on a large scale is certainly worth while trying.

And, then, we would have the desired result. The Sabbath observed as it is set before us in the Bible—the Lord's day not a holiday, but a holy day for worship and instruction—the Sabbath School not doing limited work as at present, but becoming a national institution. There would be time for friendly intercourse. The country would be at its best. We are so attracted to this side of the matter, that we shudder at what we read in our papers—of steamboats, of railways, of saloons crowded. What is to be our gain from turning the sacred day into one of pleasure, we fail to see. It is secularizing the Lord's day. It is turning it away from its purpose—from the design God had in appointing it. What does this bicycle-mania in God's hours signify? Do we imagine we can retain the day in its integrity and thus turn it to glaring enjoyment? No, Let us keep to the good old ways which our fathers trod, and seek rest from toil, and repair to God's House for refreshment, and we have taken a step in advance towards reaching a high point of civilization.

“ Thy mercy heard my infant prayer,
Thy love, with all a mother’s care,
 Sustained my childish days ;
Thy goodness watched my ripening youth,
And formed my heart to love thy truth,
 And filled my lips with praise.”

LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE.

SERMON XIV.

I have learned by experience.—GEN. xxx. 27.

There is nothing more obvious than the actual difference between the knowledge gained by learning, and the knowledge resulting from experience. Laban may have known a good deal concerning the blessing of the Lord, but was this knowledge worth anything until he was made to see and feel what it was to be blessed of God for the sake of Jacob his guest? We find in regard to all matters of interest that there are two sorts of knowledge—the one acquired from study, the other from experience. It is felt at once that the first is speculative, it lies in the mind, and is difficult of application. The second arises from turning science into art. I may have profound wisdom regarding engineering, be able to draw the bridge or machine on paper, be deeply read in regard to the principles concerned, but only a child in the matter of spanning the river as a high-way of travel. I may understand all about the construction of an engine, and yet be unable to plan, and make the parts, and join them as one. What more obvious than the information we may acquire at college in reference to chemistry, and our inability to analyze substances and

resolve them into their constituent parts. Is it not equally clear that I may be deeply read about electricity, be able from attainments to admire the mysterious and hidden force, and have wonderful conceptions concerning the lightning that flashes from the clouds, and lays prostrate before it man and beast, or pulverizes huge rocks, or rends the mountain's side ; yet I might not be able to run an electric car, it is impossible for me to control the wonderful current so as to light up the palatial building at a thousand points, or to propel the ship at sea. It is a sure thing, the difference between speculative and practical knowledge, the distinction between science and art, the possibility of taking medals and high prizes at college, and yet being verily a child in ordinary, every day business. We are to enquire this morning whether, as regards religion, one may not have learned its science, whether I may not be a profound theologian, acquainted with the Bible, learned in its histories, know the creeds, yet wanting in the knowledge of those things to be gained by actual experience. Is there not a very deep and useful lesson to be taught by such considerations ?

I. Let me speak, first of all, of what is meant by learning religion by experience. We may have a practical knowledge of Christianity without much or in truth any of that which is gained from the study of books, or listening to the instructions of competent teachers. We may be Christians without being scholars and mastering the Bible, or the Catechism, or the mass of theological works. It is a comfort to know we are really followers of the Lord

Jesus. The first thing is our conversion. It may happen we know little of Biblical truth, and Jesus comes to us with one or more of His precious invitations. A single verse like, "He that believeth in me hath eternal life," may suffice to save from sin and death. How often has it occurred that one may be turned from wrath by the singing of a gospel hymn, such as, "Jesus lover of my soul," or "Just as I am without one plea." Nay, we may not even have heard so much, but we may have been blessed by listening to the learned words of some preacher; perhaps the sermon treated such a text as, "Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." The preacher presented before me the original condition in which I was found, and urged with such intensity of purpose the necessity of my connection with Christ, as a branch is joined with the vine, that I have yielded my heart to the Saviour and found peace in Him. It is possible for the Redeemer to place himself so vividly before the sinner, even without written word or powerful speech—that He becomes to me the living Christ, the bearer of my sin. What an inspiration it is to think that a Christian may become such a clear exposition to me of the soul being saved through faith in the great sacrifice, that I am led to yield my heart to the blessed Son of God! It is possible for a man to be rescued from perishing at the last moment before yielding up his soul, and with but little effective instruction. There is the soldier struck down in battle. His wounds are fatal. He has but a few

moments to live. But there comes into his soul the memory of a mother's example. He sees her as he was wont in other days bent down in prayer. Some few words are recalled. Although long since dead, he hears her say, "I am safe in the arms of Jesus." He knows but little. The name of Jesus comes sweetly to his ear, and all he is able to say is, "Lord, have mercy on me." From the moment the words pass his lips, he is a Christian. It may be as I remember to have occurred in a railroad accident of which I was a witness. There was a man with both legs broken through. The lower part of each limb hung only by a piece of skin. The blood had poured from his body, He was quite conscious, and I remember him to have cried for his mother. Who knows the flood of saving recollection that flowed from his heart? There are many men and women who have not enjoyed much advantage in the way of Christian instruction, who are not able to read and write, and yet Jesus has come to them by His Spirit. They see Christ the living Saviour. They cry, "Lord be merciful." In that moment there comes into the soul a deep sense of God's pardoning love. They give their heart to Jesus. They know how to commune with Him. They lean upon their beloved. Their prayer is real. They come to a knowledge of what the Lord can do for them. The offer of salvation is accepted. Henceforth they yield their hearts to the beloved Messiah. They walk with Him. The consciousness arises of Christ being with them. They may not know the contents of the Pentatuch, or the Psalms, or the Prophets, and yet they know Christ. Nor can they

repeat the commandments, yet they are within the blessed arms of the Great Physician. Such may have never heard of any one of the creeds, and yet there is the assurance within their breasts of a loving, pardoning God. It is evident many are lacking spiritual knowledge, and yet they know the Saviour. We may feel assured of there being many persons suffering from want of early training, who never can acquire much information concerning the history and development of God's people, and still their walk and conversation are right. How comforting to feel oneself in the clefts of the great Rock that is higher than we are, though unable to narrate correctly the events recorded by the Evangelists. We have seen many sweet examples of Christians even in childhood. There is something in the young and tender heart responsive to the Christian influences around, and the babe learns to whisper softly the dear Name. Oh how beautiful is religion in the young lad or girl who has not as yet acquired much knowledge of Scripture! It should stir the heart of every parent to think how greatly he may influence his child to close with Christ's importunate invitations simply by means of his own example. Let your household see you are a man or woman of prayer, that you are one who delights in communion with God, though you have not had much chance of acquiring the learning of the schools, and you may have reason to shout for joy at beholding the beautiful spectacle of your family coming one and another to Christ long before they could attend to knowledge of books. Is it not an assuring thought to those who make it their business

to preach Christ to others—they may succeed in bringing even the drunkard, or profane, or worldling to the Lord, without being able to state in carefully worded propositions what faith in Christ means. They may learn to pray before they can say the Lord's prayer. They may utter praise in crudest manner before any of the hymns are familiar to the mind. Let us then take courage and present Christ in the first instance. Let us think of a man knowing by experience the love of God which passeth all knowledge. Let us remember that a single word may be a revelation, that immediately on hearing the Gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," a man, aye and his entire household, may be delivered from bondage.

II. Let me, secondly, speak a warning not on this account to think meanly of theoretical knowledge. Everything has its place. While rejoicing in the assurance of one being saved and learning much by experience without culture, yet there is great advantage in being learned in the Scriptures. It is possible to be a professor of theology and not be a Christian. One might have the Bible by heart and yet not be a follower of Jesus. This is so obviously true we need not dwell on it. But it does not follow there is no good in theological attainments. We should set a child at earliest moment to acquire a fair and useful knowledge of the Bible. Here we have indeed a beautiful science. The Scriptures are simply wonderful in themselves. I do not know a more interesting book. Think of the personages which come before us. Adam, Abel, Seth, Abraham, Rebekah, Joseph, Moses,

Miriam, Joshua, Ruth, David, Solomon, the host of prophets. It is a never failing and ever absorbing story—the revelation of God to his creatures. Remember the countries, the rivers, the lakes, the mountains—in a word, the scenery of the Bible. To how many valuable works has this given rise ! Just recall the endless dictionaries, geographies, histories, which are to be studied in order to acquire a knowledge of the Bible. Away from the saving character of the Scriptures, think of the admirable contents in the shape of interesting human events, incidents most suggestive, providences leading men onwards and upwards. What remarkable literature there is in the word of God ! There is nothing outside of it to equal the writings of Moses. What a gem is the book of Ruth ! How instructive the histories of Israel's people, of their journeyings, of their battles ! Can you place before me a more lovely or original, or profound book of poetry than the Psalms ? They are admired in all lands and in every age. Children delight to commit them to memory. Older people learn to see in them jewels of thought, of comparison, of illustration. Is there any work to match the book of Proverbs ? There is not a wrong utterance. The sentences are complete. Every one has some precious gem of truth. How striking are the prophets—one and all, but let me say more especially the minor ones, who are but little read or thought about. Jonah, Joel, Micah, Malachi,—these are excellent reading. Their thoughts are impressive. You can quote from any one of them sparkling gems.

The New Testament as a whole is perfect in its human touches, in a delineation of the lofty Person, in beautiful odes, in deep wisdom. As a work of literary value, I am sure, there is nothing to compare with it. But try to conceive the immense libraries to which this old Scripture has given rise—how the Gospel has fired the souls of poets of all centuries till now we have the fullest and rarest collection. Think of the vast tomes of theology. See the miles of volumes in our great libraries on Church history, biography of Christians of the various centuries; consider the endless creeds, catechisms, books of instruction. Such is the knowledge we are to acquire. It is all important in itself. No one can afford to despise it. He shows his ignorance who attempts to do this. What an intellectual loss would it be, if all these books were burned ! Could we possibly make up for the want of them? No, let us emphasize this aspect of our subject. It is all important. Even infidels have to confess their appreciation of our books of learning and works of art. He is foolish indeed who will deliberately set himself against this view. Let us rather strive to learn all we can.

III. Let me speak, thirdly, of turning the science of theology into the art of holy living—or how to make Bible doctrine a matter of practical experience. For illustration let me refer to the physician's career. Study of the great principles of bodily life and of the laws of nature becomes in the first place the bounden duty of the student of medicine, and of the physician all through

his career. When he has mastered this knowledge he enters upon his second course of learning—making a practical application of what he has gained in the schools. If he is wise and determined to grow to usefulness and honor, this two fold learning will mark his entire course. So it is with the Christian. Before conversion he may have learned much from Bible reading, hearing sermons, or Sabbath School instruction. From the moment of his call by God the value of his scholarship will at once appear and be felt. Let me speak of the doctrine concerning *sin*. We can see its origin in the fall of man. As we read the Bible we are ever coming into touch with sinners. The burden of iniquity is upon David. He says, “Blessed is the man whose sin is covered.” He speaks of “his mother conceiving him in sin.” He cries, “Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.” According to the book of Proverbs, “Sin is a reproach to any people.” How impressive are the words of Isaiah, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him!” Jesus pourtrays the sinner in vivid colors when He speaks of the prodigal as going into a far country and there bestowing his goods upon riotous living. What a picture of human degradation! The Apostle Paul goes into the subject thoroughly when he shows sin to be reigning in the heart, that a man is dead in sin, that there is fearful condemnation for the wicked. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” One cannot read

the Romans without feeling that he is naturally a heinous sinner, for the Apostle asks, ‘ What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?’ He says, “The wages of sin is death.” It is obvious that a person may know this doctrine to perfection. He may be able to set it forth effectively in sermon, or book. And yet he may not feel that sin is warring in his members. When, however, he is made feel himself to be a sinner by the Spirit of God, then the knowledge of the Divine teachings on this subject floods his mind. When he is cast down like Saul of Tarsus, whose knowledge of the Old Testament rose in rebellion against him as he cried for mercy, then the word of God stands up as his reprobate. He utters himself in the language of Scripture in all his cries for pardon, in his confessions of guilt, in his petitions for a new heart and a new life. So it is, my brethren, with the correlated doctrine of *justification by faith*. How beautifully consistent is the word regarding the relationship of the creature to the Creator when he is considered now as made righteous because of his trust in the merits of the Saviour! One may grasp the subject as presented in the Bible. He may speak fluently concerning the mercy to pardon and the grace to help. He may discourse eloquently upon the righteousness of Christ and utter deep thoughts concerning the sinner as now covered with the Saviour’s seamless, spotless, holy robe. But the doctrine is merely clothed in words. He feels not the truth that is in it. He knows nothing of relationship with God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is

like a car detached. It is motionless, dead, or, if on the main track, is an obstacle, or it may be a source of danger. But when he becomes attached to God by believing in Christ and feels that his Father is now treating him as a son, he can turn to his store house of Scriptural learning, and pour out his heart in the appropriate utterance, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits;" or he can resort to the language of Paul to express himself, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." How clear does the meaning of the Spirit appear when the words of Scripture are now to be illustrated by his own deep feelings! The thought of a man being justified by grace is now understood in the light of experience. He stands redeemed before God. The real difference between him and the man who has only the knowledge of experience is, that the condition of him who knows the doctrine is an illumination of the word of God. And so it is with the precious teachings of the Bible regarding *sanctification*. Jesus says, "Howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come." The Apostle speaks of "being in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us *sanctification*." He says 2 Thess. ii. 13. "But we are bound to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because

God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth." What an important part of the teaching of the New Testament, "even our sanctification!" But it is only like a poem which fills the air with melody as it is read, and yet the hearer fails to catch its meaning. But how precious is this truth when the Spirit dwells in me! How inspiring to know that I am become holy through my faith in the righteousness of Christ and by the presence and blessing within and upon me of the Divine Spirit! The Apostle intensely realizes this vital matter when saying, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever." And in the same degree, though possibly not to the same extent, am I able now to declare myself as set apart by God for a holy purpose, henceforth to give my life in humble service, and to await with confidence my passage into the glories of the skies, or the coming of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with great power of illumination.







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